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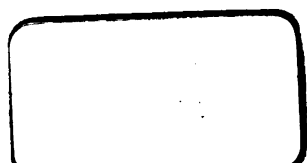
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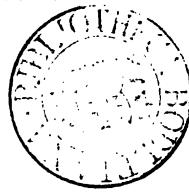
EXPOSURE
OF
MISREPRESENTATIONS
CONTAINED
IN THE PREFACE TO
THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

BY

H. C. ROBINSON, Esq.

BARRISTER AT LAW ;

AND EDITOR OF MR. CLARKSON'S "STRICTURES."



LONDON :
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1840.

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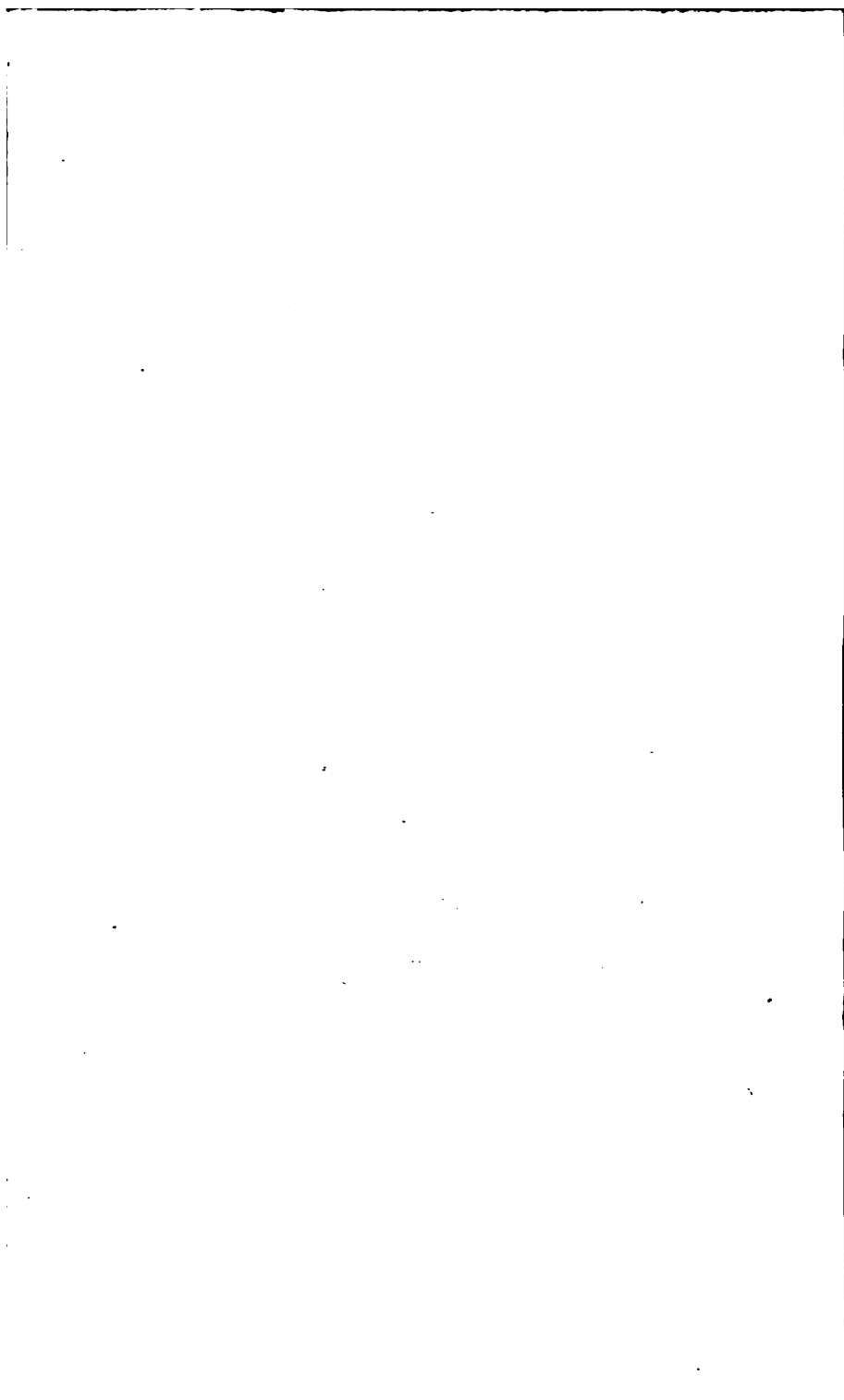
THE object of this little book being a personal vindication, and the occasion fugitive, it ought properly to be printed as a pamphlet; but as it is said that there have been sold [Qy. to Mr. Murray, or the public ?] THIRTY *Thousand* volumes * of the "*Life of William Wilberforce*," independently of the future thousands of the *Life* and the "*Correspondence of William Wilberforce*;" and as there may be among the possessors of those volumes a few score who have a love of historical truth, and who may be glad to bind up with one of them an explanation of some of the remarkable peculiarities in those works, as well as a correction of some of their gross errors :—be pleased to let this be printed in the same size.

The Author.

* Volumes,—not *copies*,—as some of the periodicals understood the editors. I fell into the same mistake, and was laughed at for my simplicity.

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EXPOSURE
OF
MISREPRESENTATIONS,
&c. &c.

SECT. I.—INTRODUCTION.

THE misrepresentations which I purpose to expose in this little book, for the greater part, concern primarily and directly myself alone, and not my friend Mr. Clarkson; and the question first raised, and discussed most at length, has altogether the character of those which occupy our civil tribunals, and concerns merely the personal honour of myself and the Messrs. Robert and Samuel Wilberforce. I state this at the risk of inducing the general reader to lay the book down unread; for I am well aware that he will care nothing about me and my character, and, I suspect, very little about my adversaries and their character. I should, therefore, have contented myself with distributing a more condensed statement of these strictly personal matters

among my private friends, but for this consideration, —that indirectly, and consequentially, my personal vindication will throw a strong light on the points at issue between my friend and our common opponents. Therefore I have put this small writing into a publisher's hands, considering it as a supplement, not merely to the "Correspondence," but also to the "Life of William Wilberforce," of which the biographers boast of having sold 30,000 volumes. A few remarks on that work will not be irrelevant to this secondary object.

The "Life of Mr. Wilberforce" is a book not destined to fill a place in the literature of the country. It is, as far as it is anything, the memorial of a very able and an eminently good man; but of whom, except for one great act of his life, posterity would know nothing and care nothing. His eminent place in the religious world, and the social graces of his character, gave him distinction in his day; but each age enjoys its own worthies; nor can the names even of the best of men be frequently on the lips of future generations, except when they are historically connected with what constitutes the business and living interest of each age. Dean Collett still survives in his school; and Sir Thomas Gresham in his revived professorships, and in the Exchange, which we hope soon to see restored. As long as prisons and prison-discipline are objects of importance to legislators, the name of Howard will last as an historical name; and in like

manner the names of Clarkson and Wilberforce will endure as long as Slavery, and the commerce of Slaves, form chapters in the history of civilization. It may be safely predicted that, in the next generation, few will ever open any of these 30,000 volumes, except some inquirer into the history of the Abolition; and most certainly no one who does not feel as deep interest in all that concerns Thomas Clarkson as in what respects William Wilberforce.

The disappointment of any casual reader, who may take up the "Life" with that object, will be very great. The Quarterly Review has very truly said, that it is, "with very short exceptions, an history of the Abolition struggle."—"A very rambling and confused one certainly, because it is, like all the rest of these volumes, composed of desultory memoranda." But what will still more unpleasantly affect any future reader of that "Life," than its literary defects, is this, that it is written in a spirit manifestly unfriendly to the great body of Abolitionists. The Messrs. Wilberforce inherit few of the sympathies of their father, and stand aloof from the great body of those who were their father's associates, and who finally succeeded, when he had retired from public life, in effecting the great purpose for which he lived. With the exception of the sons of their father's friends and coadjutors, Messrs. Macaulay and Stephen (the latter also allied to him

by marriage), the Messrs. Wilberforce barely tolerate the survivors and representatives of the original Abolitionists, and betray even an antipathy towards the religious and political bodies with whom their father was connected. It was by a society consisting almost entirely of Quakers, under the direction of Mr. Clarkson, that Mr. Wilberforce was retained to be the parliamentary manager of the Abolition; which society is represented, most incorrectly, and even absurdly, as the *allies* of Mr. Wilberforce, whereas, in fact, they were the acting body whom he represented in parliament.

It is a notorious fact, which the sons of Mr. Wilberforce cannot possibly conceal from the world, though they would gladly conceal it from themselves, that with a few eminent exceptions—such as Bishop Horsley in the church, and Mr. Pitt among politicians—the great body of the associates of Mr. Wilberforce in his great work belong to those parties to which even himself, in a great measure, and themselves are altogether and most strenuously opposed. Next to the Quakers, the Protestant Dissenters almost universally espoused the cause of the negroes; while only individual churchmen were zealous in the cause. So of politicians:—a far greater proportion of Whigs than of Tories is to be found among them. Nor was it till the Whigs came into power, that they, in a few months, effected what the Tories, in many years, did not do. The great parliamentary names

in the Abolition body are, William Smith, Whitbread, Romilly, and Brougham, &c., &c. Among the prominent reformers in modern times Mr. Hume is, perhaps, the only one who has betrayed proslavery feeling. Now if the Messrs. Wilberforce had really inherited their father's spirit, their book would have manifested a kindly feeling towards all his associates. But far from it. The opposite sentiment prevails throughout. There is one remarkable passage in the "Life" written with the manifest object of casting that notorious relation into shade, while the biographers' more frequent and successful expedient is silence. I quote, wherever I can, from my "Supplement to Mr. Clarkson's Strictures," as that writing is most carefully kept out of sight by the Messrs. Wilberforce, while the author is the subject of their misrepresentations.

"Giving these gentlemen credit for sympathising with their father in the great achievement of his public life, we should expect to find them delicate, indulgent and charitable, towards those who, to whatever party in church or state they belonged, succeeded him in his labours, and were the instruments in carrying into execution the further great work of emancipation. But it is not so; on the contrary, this is their tone. They expatiate (vol. ii. 53) on the great importance to the cause, that its leader 'could combine and render irresistible the scattered sympathies of the religious classes.' 'Its first supporters, accordingly, were not found among the partisans of political commotion, but amongst the educated and religious.' 'Many of the clergy,' writes Granville

Sharp, 'are firm and cordial friends to the undertaking,' &c. 'If anything were wanted to complete this proof, it would be found in the *grievous injury the cause sustained in later years from the character of its chief political supporters.*' I was not before aware that the chief supporters of the emancipation cause in parliament belonged to the irreligious party; and should have thought that, if true, the Messrs. Wilberforce would have been the last to obtrude the fact on public notice. This stigma, cast on so large a portion of Mr. Wilberforce's associates, renders less surprising the particular acrimony towards one individual."

It is of the utmost importance, for the just appreciation of the books of the Messrs. Wilberforce, that this should be distinctly understood; and it, at the same time, suggests an explanation, the least disreputable to them, for their possibly sometimes involuntary departure from the line of historical impartiality. I therefore pursue the subject. The Edinburgh Reviewer of Mr. Wilberforce's Life, on this point an unexceptionable witness, states of Mr. Wilberforce, that, being "a Tory by predilection, he was in action a Whig,"—"his heart was with Mr. Pitt, but on all the cardinal questions of the times his vote was given to Mr. Fox"; and the reviewer considers him as engaged in a "conflict of sentiment with principle." Now there is no conflict of this kind in the sons of Mr. Wilberforce; their feelings and their principles are in perfect harmony. Highly Conservative in politics, they are also High Churchmen. Their personal connections, also, are among that class who are the descendants and repre-

sentatives of that party, among whom were found the great body of the supporters of slavery ; not that that party *now* support slavery, for that cause is lost.

If I may credit general report, they are theologians of the Oxford school. If I do them wrong in this, I beg their pardon. How that section of the English Church stands towards all without the pale of the Catholic Church in its two great divisions, the Roman and the Anglican, is well known ; and how, with the opinions concerning the sacraments held by the Oxford sect, they must feel towards the Quakers, who reject all the sacraments, the only body who, as such, espoused the Abolition cause, I need not point out. This, however has produced another sort of conflict and embarrassment to the biographers. They could not at once cast off all their father's old friends and connections. It was from them only that they could obtain the information they so much needed concerning the Abolition itself, of which, when they sat down to get up their book, they probably knew little more than it was some great act which their father did, and which had no value in their eyes but as *his* work. This entire subordination of the great event, the Abolition, in their eyes, to their father's share in the measure that led to it, it is that renders them so unfit to be the faithful historians of it ; a character, by the bye, which they disclaim when they have to apologise for omissions, but are willing

to assume, in justification of disclosures, which alone, in that character, would be relevant.

All these influences, tending so unfavourably to the just consideration of the Abolition cause, and the abolitionists in general, were particularly operative in their application to Mr. Clarkson, in whom were concentrated all the objections which a narrow and sectarian spirit might raise against any of the abolitionists. Though a churchman in his personal convictions, he belonged to a very liberal class. He became the literary apologist of the Quakers, among whom he had many friends, and has been by many, therefore, thought to be a Quaker. In fact, however, though he early in life abandoned the church as a profession, he has never ceased to be a member of its community. In his youth, while under the influence of strong religious feelings, such as led him to devote his property and his life to the cause of Abolition, he was an enthusiast for civil as well as religious liberty, and, as that class generally were, friendly to the French revolution. This is no reproach to him in the minds of the larger portion of his present friends; but it was so even at an early period of the Abolition contest, among the then Tory party, and is so still in the eyes of his present depreciators. It has been certainly with no feeling of good-will to him, but with great satisfaction to themselves, that the Editors have inserted a letter from Mr. Hoare, vol. i. p. 89, which has very little relation to Mr. Wilberforce, but which records

this fact—that apprehensions were entertained by some abolitionists on the ground of Mr. Clarkson's supposed predilections towards the French cause in 1792; and for no other apparent reason has that letter been published now.

This great opposition in opinion on all matters of party in Wilberforce and Clarkson had a natural tendency to weaken the attachment to each other. Mr. Wilberforce's letters to Mr. Clarkson show, however, that his affection never subsided, though personal intercourse became rare, from Mr. Clarkson's residence in the country. In his children, on the contrary, all the causes of alienation operate with great force. In addition to which, they have suffered a feeling of personal jealousy to take possession of their minds, the consequences of which must be lamented by those who would be most indulgent to the filial sentiment in which it originated. Neither Mr. Clarkson nor his editor has manifested any reluctance to make this acknowledgment. This jealousy seems to have been aggravated by the praises publicly conferred on Mr. Clarkson by poets of the eminence of Wordsworth and Southey. This feeling they had the prudence not to express, but to leave their near connection and friend to avow in the *Edinburgh Review*. It was this unfair review, in various respects far more injurious to Mr. Clarkson than even the "Life" itself, which occasioned my first interference in this matter. An opportunity being afforded me of exposing, in the *Eclectic Re-*

view, the flagrant wrong committed in the Edinburgh Review, I gladly availed myself of it ; and as the topics discussed in that portion of the Eclectic Review which respects Mr. Clarkson, and which alone I wrote, were quite independent of the line of defence which Mr. Clarkson himself would naturally follow ; I considered it advantageous to the cause of truth, to present it to the public in an improved form, in combination with Mr. Clarkson's "Strictures."

Having pointed out certain gross misstatements in the Edinburgh Review of April 1838, I fully expected an apologetical acknowledgment in the June number. It did not appear ; and this was a subject of just sorrow and censure, considering the quarter whence the Edinburgh Review proceeded. However, Mr. Clarkson's "Strictures" were reviewed in the Edinburgh Review in the succeeding October number, certainly by a different writer, and in a very different spirit. The most material error which I had pointed out in the Eclectic, misrepresenting what the "Life" had stated to be a reimbursement of expenses as a remuneration for services, was frankly acknowledged. My elaborate reply to the reviewer was passed over in silence ; but it was civilly said, that I had made a very powerful use of the Minute-books of the Abolition Society. This is the portion of my "Supplement" in which I rendered the most important service to Mr. Clarkson's cause against the biographers, by exhibiting them as destitute of

all authority and credit. Here it is that I furnished occasion to the disingenuous misrepresentation, which is the first on my list in this writing ; and here, consequently, it is that my own defence runs in the same current with Mr. Clarkson's cause. And it is in this combination alone that lies my apology for giving even a show of publicity to a personal vindication, which is of importance only to the party assailed and his friends.

Some of the imputations are so grave that no man can silently permit himself to be charged with them : and having to repel these, I was not unwilling to notice minor inaccuracies, which might have been left to themselves, on account of their mere insignificance. Being once engaged in writing, I thought it useful to expose also the poor attempts at apology to Mr. Clarkson, and other manifold misrepresentations respecting him. For this is remarkable in this Preface, that it abounds with misstatements, either wilful or inadvertent, even in the most petty details.

SECT. II.—THE NOTE.

A due regard to method requires me to lay before the reader entire the NOTE, in which the editors have compressed their charges against my "Supplement to the Strictures." It will be quite unintelligible to those readers who may not already have read that Supplement, as the editors meant it to be to their readers, in the hope that the credit given to

their name and office might secure for it an uninquiring and thoughtless acquiescence. The figures are an index to the following sections of the Exposure, and the change of type directs the reader's attention to the more gross of the imputations.

"The volumes are not private property. They ought not to be left (as they at present are) in private hands, least of all, in the hands of one so little able to appreciate their value as the *tardily acknowledged carelessness* of their late or present possessor shows him to be."

Note.—"It is perhaps needful to make good this charge. In the Appendix which Mr. Clarkson has unwisely suffered to accompany his 'Strictures,' it is coarsely asserted that an entry quoted in the 'Life' from the Committee's Journals is not in them (§ 3). The INVENTOR OF THE CHARGE HAS BEEN SINCE COMPELLED TO RETRACT HIS ACCUSATION, and confess that the passage stands just where the editors had said it did. There is no reasoning with such *loose assertors*. In spite of all that has been said, the editors wish, and have ever wished, to speak of Mr. Clarkson with the respect his services and age command (§ 10). If the compiler of the Appendix required any notice, it must be in a far different tone. *There are some persons with whom no wise man of any character will enter into controversy* (§ 4), and such the editors deem this compiler. They cannot reply to a writer who at first *insinuated that they had probably forged a letter of their father's* (§ 5), and who now implies that they have discredibly printed others because they are a 'saleable commodity' (§ 6); who distinctly charges them with wilfully garbling a whole correspondence (§ 7), and *who attributed to them the fabrication of an original document*, because he was too habitually careless to find it, though its place was plainly pointed out (§ 3). They cannot think it necessary to prove, that when Mr. Wilberforce supplied the Abolition Committee with copies of his letter on the Slave Trade at cost price, he was not receiving remuneration from a Society to which he himself contributed (§ 8). Above all, they can enter into no controversy with one WHO HAS DARED TO INSINUATE that Mr. Wilberforce affectionately promised services which he never intended to perform (p. 75), and harboured and transmitted schemes of secret vengeance, where for years he simulated friendship, p. 89 (§ 9). Such allegations are their own best corrective."

SECT. III.—THE *Crimen Falsi*.

For in the cunning truth itself 's a lie.—POPE.

The books referred to in the text are the Minute-books of the Abolition Society, concerning which the authors add a suggestion that they ought to be deposited in the British Museum. I suspect that when they wrote this they were aware that this was actually in contemplation; but they little thought that the suggestion is of so old a date as 1834, and that it came from Mr. Richard Phillips, who disapproved of Mr. Clarkson's having too good naturedly sent them to the Messrs. Wilberforce on the application of Mr. Fowell Buxton. In fact, I had already inquired of the gentleman at the head of the British Museum as to the mode of proceeding, in order to secure their being placed in that repository of national records, when they were returned to Mr. Clarkson for other purposes. The original intention has not been abandoned. I am assured that the statement of the editors concerning these books is incorrect; but this "Exposure" is not meant to embrace matter that would require any reference to Mr. Clarkson—I have made none. It was not till Mr. Clarkson was aware how grossly his good nature had been abused by the incorrect references to them in the "Life," that he peremptorily demanded a return of them. The demand was complied with; but I did not receive them till the 12th of July, 1838. At that time I had been honoured by Mr. Clarkson

with the commission to publish the "Strictures," and with permission to add what I pleased. I was much occupied when they reached me, having the double task of correcting the press of Mr. Clarkson's text, and supplying my own. Most anxiously did I examine these books, trying the correctness of the biographers' statements, and for that purpose extracting every reference to Mr. Wilberforce out of the numerous details; and with no misgiving of a failure of eye-sight I made a report of the contents in the "Supplement to the Strictures," of which I proceed now to copy all the material parts. I the less regret the length of my extracts, because they so satisfactorily ascertain the disqualification of the Messrs. Wilberforce to be historians.

"The reader will bear in mind in what tone the authors have presumed to speak of Mr. Clarkson's History. To the authority of his book they oppose their own; forgetting that, as they were scarcely born when the History appeared, they can have no authority as witnesses. Their statements, especially when intimated by themselves to be contradictory to Mr. Clarkson's, should have been accompanied by something like evidence; yet their references are to nothing but private letters, fragments of letters, and minute extracts from diaries. There is, however, one notable exception—they repeatedly refer to these very books. Their one great object in referring to them is, to supply something like a colour for their pretence, that the Abolition was Mr. Wilberforce's *personal* concern, in which he was the principal, and the very Society, 'instituted in 1787 for effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade,' at the utmost only his allies! They gave an account of the origin of this Society, p. 152. 'Their first meeting was held upon the 22nd of May, 1787, when Granville Sharp

was elected chairman of the twelve who met together, most of whom were London merchants, and all but two Quakers. This body soon increased, and grew into a valuable ally of Mr. Wilberforce. It was long, indeed, before his name was openly enrolled amongst their number, because his exertions promised to be more effectual by his being independent of them; but from the first he directed their proceedings. (Vide MS. Transactions of the Abolition Society.)' This assertion Mr. Clarkson has peremptorily denied, and that will be deemed sufficient as to the fact itself. I have only to deal with the '*Vide MS. Transactions of the Abolition Society*,' and I will lay before the reader every reference to Mr. Wilberforce on the books till his name was 'openly enrolled.' The first is dated six months after his supposed secret direction of their proceedings:—'1787, October 30th, the Treasurer reports that he has received a letter from W. Wilberforce, Esq., *requesting information as speedily as possible* relative to the Slave Trade: Resolved, that Granville Sharp, Samuel Hoare, junior, and Philip Sansom be a committee to confer from time to time with W. Wilberforce, Esq., on the subject of the Slave Trade, and to communicate such information as may occur.' It is a pity for the biographers that this minute should record only that Mr. Wilberforce sought for information from the body he was directing."

In this part of my quotation lies the essence of the charge against them. I then proceeded:

"However, after another four months we do, in fact, find something emanating from him, viz.—'February 16th, 1788, Mr. Clarkson having reported that Mr. Wilberforce had strongly recommended to the Committee to be provided with evidence to be laid before the Privy Council in proof of the inhumanity and impolicy of the Slave Trade: Resolved, that Mr. Clarkson be requested to arrange the evidence necessary for that purpose, and that the following gentlemen be appointed a sub-committee to assist him therein.' This was too important for the biographers

not to be particularly noticed ; and therefore they make an especial reference to it thus : ‘ Meanwhile, *at Mr. Wilberforce’s suggestion*, the friends of Abolition prepared their evidence, and marshalled their witnesses. (Vide Minutes of the Abolition Committee, February 16, 1788.)’ The important difference between a *strong recommendation* and a *suggestion* must not be overlooked. It would naturally be inferred from the latter expression, that the idea of preparing such evidence emanated from Mr. Wilberforce ; and yet a very little reflection would have reminded the authors that the Society was itself formed, and Mr. Clarkson’s laborious journeys were undertaken, for scarcely any other than this purpose. It was the one great business of the Society, and the recommendation was quite superfluous, except as an urging to *immediate activity*. That end was at all events attained ; and Mr. Clarkson immediately set about what is here called arranging, in common speech, *getting up*, the evidence for the Privy Council.

“ But the biographers have not done with their references yet, for they go on, p. 183.—‘ *Throughout this time*,’ [an expression that implies a multiplicity of incidents, and the time being generally the year 1788,] ‘ throughout this time, the operations of the London Committee for procuring the Abolition of the Slave Trade were directed by his advice. The inquiries of the Privy Council were suspended for the summer, and the friends of Abolition were employed in keeping alive the general interest of the country, and gaining a larger mass of evidence for future use. To effect these purposes, they resolved to institute corresponding committees, and to hold a public meeting in the metropolis. Of these resolutions, *they were persuaded by Mr. Wilberforce’s arguments to modify the first and rescind the second*. (MS. Proceedings of the Committee.)’

“ Now to explain this, I should state that Mr. Clarkson had formed a project of establishing county-committees to stir up the nation. As usual, he offered to carry his own project into execution, and a minute of the 10th of June records the accept-

ance of his offer by the Committee. Then follows a minute on the 29th July, 1788, of the appointment of a sub-committee 'to correspond and advise with Mr. Clarkson from time to time during his present journey, for the purpose of establishing committees in various districts of the country, *paying regard to the advice contained in Mr. Wilberforce's Letter to the Treasurer of the 8th of July, to avoid giving any possible occasion of offence to the Legislature by forced unnecessary associations.*' "

I wish it to be remarked, that these italics were thus printed originally. This shows my intention that Mr. Wilberforce's Letter should not be overlooked. The next sentence is the one of which the editors have made such dextrous use.

"This is all; and there is no trace on the books of any modifying or rescinding of resolutions. Where the evidence for this statement is, the biographers alone know. It is not where they state it to be. The incident supposed is not improbable in itself, and corresponds with the anti-popular turn of Mr. Wilberforce's mind.—Such is the evidence of the repeatedly cited books in proof of Mr. Wilberforce having *directed* the Committee. I wish to add one remark: He only can be said to be the *director* of a measure who points out *what is to be done*—who suggests and proposes; not he who merely criticises and objects, and warns—such a person is not the director. He may be a useful or cautious adviser; and it is in this character only that these minute-books show Mr. Wilberforce."

Then follow five pages containing a summary of the contents of the books, as far as they show the participation of Mr. Wilberforce in the proceedings of the Committee, each reference to him being made with the most conscientious minuteness. I sent the book to the press, rejoicing in having had

the means of adding so important a document to it. Though I was conscious of an anxiety not to be uncandid towards the Messrs. Wilberforce, yet when a second edition of the "Strictures" was called for, I thought it right to add this note to the Supplement on the books.

"I am sensible that these remarks might have been advantageously extended; but as the validity of the inferences drawn by me from these books has not been, and probably never will be, impeached, I will leave them as they are, contenting myself with three observations, added merely to obviate a possible misconception.

"1. After Mr. Wilberforce became a member of the Committee in 1791, and till the retirement of Mr. Clarkson in 1794, he attended the Committee about twenty times (Mr. Clarkson attended about forty times); but there is not the faintest indication of his having originated any one proceeding, or being other than the representative in parliament of the Society, conducting in the House of Commons the business of the Society: in other words, there is not a sentence to countenance the suggestion of his *directing* the proceedings of the Society, which these books were cited by the Messrs. Wilberforce to prove.

"2. But though I repeat this remark, I beg to add most distinctly, that I do not mean to impute to these gentlemen wilful misrepresentation. They came to the inspection of these books with fixed impressions concerning their father's importance, which they could not divest themselves of, and mistook the drift and effect of what they met with in books they perhaps looked at but cursorily, and imperfectly understood."

This assurance was most sincerely made: I really ascribed their grossly inaccurate references to inexperience in matters of business. I considered the writers as schoolmen, better qualified to pen

a religious or moral sentiment than to examine documentary evidence ; and regretted that their accomplished friend had not devoted his great business talents to this task, rather than to the composition of a laboured *plaidoyer* for them in the Edinburgh Review. My own share in the "Strictures" is so subordinate, that I feel myself at liberty to speak of the book without incurring the reproach of self-commendation. It has been eloquently praised in the prefatory remarks to the new edition of the "History of the Abolition," in which it is said that "it has been admired by some of the ablest controversial writers of the age as a model of excellence in controversial writing." It was eminently successful ; nor have I heard of any unfavourable opinion of this work that was not also ascribed to another near connection of the Messrs. Wilberforce. The "Strictures" were reviewed in the Edinburgh Review, and Mr. Clarkson had the consolation of reading in the October number an acknowledgment of the most gross of the misrepresentations in the preceding article, that especially in which a reimbursement of expenses was represented to be a remuneration for services. I noticed this article, I hope becomingly, in an Advertisement to the Second edition, and, as it is in few hands, I reprint a part of it.

"The value of these concessions has certainly not been lessened, in Mr. Clarkson's estimation, by the reviewer having shown a desire to give as little pain as possible to the Messrs. Wilberforce,

in rendering justice to Mr. Clarkson. The editor, too, on his own part, declares himself to be as well pleased with the *expressive silence* of the review in October, as to other points at issue between him and the reviewer in the April number, as if it had contained the most formal acknowledgment in his favour. There is now established among the contributors to a review a certain *solidarité* (borrowing a word from the French lawyers, which our *partnership* inadequately renders); so that an express confession of error is become even more rare on the part of one of these literary corporations than from individuals. This was avoided even in the memorable instance, a few years ago, of the two reviews of 'Niebuhr's History of Rome,' in the Edinburgh Review.

"By the admission of this supplemental article, the editor of the review has atoned for the error he committed, in entrusting the review of 'Mr. Wilberforce's Life' to a gentleman who, however eminent his qualities, honourable in character, and upright in intention, stood in such a relation to the Wilberforce family, and was under the influence of such feelings—though those were of the most respectable kind—as put it out of his power to be impartial and just to an individual whose claims to distinction unfortunately seem to him to conflict with those of one whom he had through life so highly honoured and warmly loved."

In the meanwhile, Mr. Clarkson was gratified by every variety of expression of sympathy, both public and private. The insult he had received had excited general disgust, and at the same time the public attention was drawn to the subject of slavery by the legislative measures then taken. On this occasion addresses were voted to him from the towns in or near which he had resided for a number of years:—Woodbridge, Ipswich, and Bury St. Edmund's in Suffolk. Finally, the highest civic honour was conferred on him which any portion of the people of

England have it in their power to grant. The freedom of the City of London was voted to him by a unanimous resolution of the Common Council, also ordering the erection of his bust in the Council-chamber, near those of the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Granville Sharp. This was no party measure; the motion was made by the Whig Sheriff Mr. Alderman Wood, and seconded by a leader among the Conservatives, Sir Peter Laurie. This narrative is not a digression, but is connected with my immediate object; for it was on this memorable occasion that Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson came to London, and then it was that, the books being given up, turning over one of the volumes with Mrs. Clarkson, I observed the name of Mr. Wilberforce in a place where I had not seen it before. On examination, I found it to be the very minute, the existence of which I had so confidently denied, and to which I have directed the reader's notice. See the passage p. 17. The minute is in the following words:—

“ 15th July, 1788.

“ The resolution of the Committee on the 1st instant, for calling a general meeting of the Society on the 7th of August next, being read; and many doubts respecting the expediency of the measure, at this juncture, having arisen in the minds of several members; and a letter from William Wilberforce, dated Rayrigg, the 8th instant, to the Treasurer, containing many forcible arguments against it, being produced—

“ Resolved unanimously—‘ That the calling a general meeting of the Society be for the present suspended.’ ”

I was mortified at discovering this blunder; but

was relieved by the consideration that not even an entire stranger to me could suppose the omission to be wilful, because the letter of Mr. Wilberforce had been already noticed, and printed in italics. I was aware of the use a dishonourable adversary might make of the occurrence ; however, I would not suffer any consideration to divert me from the straightforward course. A mere mistake becomes a falsehood (by *relation*, as the lawyers say,) if unavowed. Accordingly, the next morning, I sent a formal, but courteous note to the Messrs. Wilberforce, copying the entry from the books, and informing them of my having just discovered it ; I pointed out to them, that I had already copied one minute which refers to Mr. Wilberforce's letter, that of the 29th of July, in page 131 ; and expressed my regret that I should have said in the same page that there is no trace in the books of the very resolution which I had then found. I intimated my willingness to give publicity to the entry if required ; and I concluded by begging the Messrs. Wilberforce to accept of my apology, of which, I said, "*they will make such use as they think proper.*" That use is the note I am commenting on !!!

In due time, I received the following answer :—

" East Farleigh, Maidstone,
April 17, 1839.

" SIR,—I have to acknowledge your letter of the 9th April, which gives me much pleasure, because it argues greater fairness than your conduct towards

me would have led me to expect. With the passage to which it refers I was acquainted: it occurs with others in a collection of extracts which I made from the records of the Abolition Society. Taken in connection with the fact that the measure suspended was not resumed, and of a subsequent letter to Mr. Clarkson, of July 29th following, I imagine that it fully bears out the assertion in the Life of Wilberforce, which you called in question. As respects your offer to make this circumstance public, I can only say that it is not for me to prescribe in what way you may choose to set yourself right with the public; and that in regard to myself, I am unwilling to suggest anything that may lead to the inference that I acquiesce in the other equally unfounded imputations which you have thrown upon me.

“I have the honour to be, Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“ROBT. J. WILBERFORCE.

“H. C. Robinson, Esq.”

This letter was not more discourteous than I might have expected. I smiled at the verbose statement of what I myself had said in fewer words, and at the suggestion of my setting myself right with the public before I was put wrong; and I knew the “other unfounded imputations” to be words of idle vapouring, as is now proved; for where are they? I felt only this objection to the giving publicity to

the incident; that it seemed impertinent to trouble the world with the unimportant confession, that the eyes of an elderly gentleman were beginning to fail him: however, luckily it happened, that about this time a really interesting letter from Mr. Wilberforce to Mr. Clarkson had been found (to be introduced hereafter), and under cover of this, I might venture to request the insertion of the other communication. Accordingly, I wrote an article, which appeared in Tait's Magazine for June, 1839. I added to a statement of the facts remarks, which, being illustrative of the question between Mr. Clarkson and Mr. Wilberforce, I here reprint. :—

“ This minute fully justifies the statement of the Messrs. Wilberforce as to this one transaction, and I very much regret my unaccountable oversight. I owe to the Messrs. Wilberforce an apology for my mistake; but I owe it to myself to remark, that it was, after all, absolutely *immaterial* as to the great question at issue between them and Mr. Clarkson. The only object of these citations from the books, is to show how much or how little Mr. Wilberforce actually interfered in the business of the Committee, beyond what must be done by any one who conducts parliamentary business. Now, this newly-discovered minute adds nothing to the information given by the one before printed by me. It still remains a very remarkable fact, that there is no evidence on the books of Mr. Wilberforce having ever suggested a single idea, beyond that of warning the Committee against giving ‘ offence to the Legislature by forced unnecessary associations.’ Mr. Clarkson having organized the Society, and brought Mr. Wilberforce into connexion with it, proceeded to establish Societies through the kingdom; Mr. Wilberforce, with the instinct of a friend and partisan of Mr. Pitt, naturally enough objected to so

much agitation, and succeeded in checking what he thought too active measures! And on this single act rests the right of Mr. Wilberforce's sons to represent him as the *Director* of the Committee."

Such are the facts on which the note is founded, and which I leave to the appreciation of the reader on a re-perusal. This very note indeed supplies a confirmation, which is not wanted, of the validity of the charge brought against the writers, of making most inaccurate references to the minute-books, by the resemblance their conduct bears to that of ordinary offenders on their trial in our common courts of justice. When at the bar, I have often remarked how, during the trial, as long as the case is in a course of clear proof, the prisoner maintains a sullen silence, until a witness makes an unlucky blunder in some very immaterial circumstance; then the prisoner becomes an altered man; he is roused to attention, and is inflamed with resentment at the wrong his innocence has sustained. "My lord, he is a perjured man; I had not a brown coat on, but a black one." "What then?" perhaps is the remark. At all events the mistake is rectified. The trial proceeds, the prisoner relapses into silence, and the conviction follows of course. It occurs to every one in court that his eagerness to contradict a real but unimportant mistake makes his silence an indirect confession of the truth of the testimony not contradicted. No one wonders that the prisoner does not perceive this, considering the class to which

he belongs ; nor ought we perhaps to be much surprised that the Messrs. Wilberforce, though placed in a station so far above that wretched class, should fall into the same snare, being in the same condition. They feel, or feign, strong indignation at the inadvertence which led to the incorrect but immaterial statement, that a certain minute, actually on the books, was not there ; but they maintain a conclusive silence when it is shown that the books disprove their repeated and most incorrect assertion, that their father directed the proceedings of the Society !!! One of them, in declaring that he took copies of the minutes, admits that he is in possession of all the evidence necessary to convict me of any other omission or a substantial error, if there were one. My unrequired and voluntary acknowledgment was, that I had overlooked a single entry in the books. Their constrained silence involves the admission that they had declared that the books contained much that was not there.

Such is the bearing of the note on their own trustworthiness as historians. In its relation to myself, I shall merely remark, that, here are two clergymen, and one of them a dignitary of the church, deliberately affirming that I had been *compelled to retract a charge*, which every reader would understand to mean, that I had been compelled *by them against my will*, they knowing that in truth there was no other compulsion than that which obliges a man of integrity to act in conformity with

its dictates. They insert the words *inventor of the charge*, which they know will strike the eye, and are likely to be fixed in the memory. It is true that they neutralize this by the word *carelessness*, being aware how few readers trouble themselves to compare one word with another; and they use another striking expression, *tardy acknowledgment*, when they know the *acknowledgment* was *immediate*, and that if they meant to refer to any distance of time between the publication of the "Strictures" and the explanation in Tait's Magazine, they should have spoken of a *late discovery*! The understanding and the moral sense of these clergymen are equally a mystery to me. I am utterly unable to imagine the Rev. Vicar of East Farleigh, and the venerable Rector of Brighstone, in the discharge of their pastoral office, expounding the ninth commandment. It would have been a task worthy the skill of Sanchez or Escobar, instructing the faithful how they may avoid the sin of bearing false witness against their neighbour, by framing their testimony in words which, though they induce a belief in what is false, are nevertheless literally true. Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* do not contain a more curious illustration of the theological art of casuistry in any of the distinctions there explained between the *Péché mortel* and the *Péché véniel*.

If any reader be inclined to deem this an uncharitable comment, he is requested to suspend his

judgment until he has read the following sections. These will exhibit other cases equally clear, if not equally flagrant.

Before I proceed to another section, I must remark that the writers have embodied a repetition of this charge among the reasons for not disputing with me, and added a feature of aggravation to the charge, which being unfounded is only an aggravated *inaccuracy*. So far was I from imputing to them a *fabrication*, which I do not even now think them capable of, that if the reader will trouble himself to re-peruse the extract from the "Supplement," he will see that I intimate that I thought the incident not improbable in itself; but I supposed that they had picked up the knowledge of it elsewhere, and confounded it with what they had seen in the books.

Nor must I pass over the epithet *loose assertor*, applied to the compiler for having corrected his own mistake. The editors ought to know, and perhaps do, that that does not make a loose assertor, but the dealing in vague and indefinite assertions, for the purpose of evasion, a practice that cannot be altogether strange to them. They meant by "loose assertor," probably, what they did not think it decorous to say more plainly, and in so expressing themselves illustrated what loose assertion means.

SECT. IV.—HOW TO AVOID CONTROVERSY.

The practical object of this note is to suggest a plausible pretext for making no particular reply to the editor of the "Strictures;" but the aversion of these gentlemen to controversy in general is something curious in its way. In the "Life" they dared to deny the truth of Mr. Clarkson's "History;" but being "most anxious to avoid anything resembling controversy *on this subject*," (i. 141.) refused to specify contradictions. This is mere absurdity: it is like knocking a man down and then running away before he rises, pleading a conscientious objection to fighting. If Messrs. Wilberforce dislike controversy on *this* subject, on *what* subject may they be inclined to it? But disliking it, why raise pretensions which only successful controversy can justify? On the questions at issue between them and Mr. Clarkson, the public voice has been loudly pronounced against them. It has been said, in the Preface to the new edition of the History of the Abolition, "In the whole history of controversy we venture to affirm there never was an instance of so triumphant a refutation as that by which these slanderous aspersions were instantly refuted, and their authors and their accomplices reduced to a silence as prudent as discreditable." The editors, in the Preface, advert to this book, but prudently abstain from any reply to this or any other portion of the powerful summary of the controversy there given.

But even they dare not, after a pause of two years, appear a second time before the public as editors of their father's Letters, without at least explaining themselves. It is the subject of the Preface, in which they say, with an amusing gravity, "They have as yet taken no public notice of Mr. Clarkson's Strictures, and they now approach them with the earnest hope *that their long silence may enable them to avoid all controversy* with a person to whom age and past services give so just a title to respect." That long silence should enable them to continue silent, is a suggestion worthy the authors. After so admirable a reason for declining to dispute with Mr. Clarkson, I could not flatter myself that they would make an exception in my favour, who have neither rendered his services, nor attained his age. •

But to return to the note: "*If the compiler of the Appendix required any notice, it must be in a far different tone.*"—"There are some persons with whom no wise man of any character will enter into controversy; and such the editors deem this compiler."

When I glanced my eye over this passage, I mistook its import, and felt a flush of indignation at what I deemed an insult; but reading it attentively, my resentment subsided. When a writer speaks of a wise man of any character, he is generally thinking of himself: so that these words of affected contempt, in reality, merely inform us that the writers

dislike me as an adversary,—a sentiment which I have no doubt this little book will strengthen.

They go on, however, to justify this: “ *They cannot reply to a writer who —*” But here I must interpose a preliminary remark which applies to all the enumerated items of their reasons for not entering into controversy with me; it is, that though a man of character may justly decline noticing mere insinuations or vague surmises, no man can allege the gravity of an imputation as a reason why he may decline to plead to it. Such a *déclinatoire* would sound strange to a French judge, as such a demurrer would in our English courts. Yet this is what these gentlemen have done in their note. Because such and such are the charges against them, therefore they will not condescend to notice the *compiler*; but as he has justified his name by *piling up*, not merely charges, but proofs against them, their haughty refusal to enter into controversy with him, that is, to plead to those charges, will be deemed, not the genuine pride of offended integrity, but a mere mask of arrogance, to cover and conceal the consciousness of wrong. Each of these pretended reasons will receive its appropriate answer, including what will be more satisfactory than convenient to me—viz. a reprint of the matter objected to.

SECT. V.—THE IMPUTED FORGERY.

“ *They cannot reply to a writer who at first insinuated that they had probably forged a letter of*

their father's." This alludes to a passage contained in the Eclectic Review of Wilberforce's Life, in the number for June 1838, of which review I have already spoken. Being desirous that Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson should not know of the task I had undertaken, I made no inquiry of them whether a certain harsh letter from Mr. Wilberforce to Mr. Clarkson was actually received or not, the publishing of which constitutes one of the serious charges brought against the biographers, and which I shall have to treat of again. Not to be guilty of tautology, I confine myself to that part of the Eclectic Review which it is alleged insinuates a probability that the editors had forged the letter. It is this:—

"Then follows a letter, supposed to have been sent by Mr. Wilberforce, full of anger, but so mixed up with respect and kindness, that we think it most probable the letter was never sent, for he complains of want of eye-sight, and says, 'this is a letter wherein I cannot employ my amanuensis.' Is it likely, then, that he would have copied such a letter? And copying-machines were not then in use. The *sent* letter could not have been in his cabinet. But it is marvellous that Mr. Wilberforce's sons, seeing that their father would not suffer his own confidential secretary to know of the letter, out of delicacy to Mr. Clarkson's feelings, should yet think themselves at liberty to publish it to all the world, thirty years afterwards, while Mr. Clarkson was still alive to suffer whatever the disclosure might inflict, and which they suppose probable, from the attempted apology. The great probability is, that the letter was thrown aside and not sent, and through inadvertence left undestroyed."

The reader will with difficulty believe that it is on this passage the imputation is raised of my having insinuated, or as they elsewhere say, darkly

hinted, that the Reverend editors had committed a forgery ; but that is the fact. It is almost superfluous to add, that it never crossed my imagination that the sons of Mr. Wilberforce were either wicked enough to forge, or clever enough to compose such a letter. Neither did I suppose that, whatever the fact might be, they were aware of its being unsent*, nor ever imputed to them anything worse than a secret pleasure at having found something that it would gratify their ill-will to Mr. Clarkson to make known. I was not then fully aware of the circumstances that so seriously aggravate the wrong of publishing this private correspondence. But I must not anticipate.

SECT. VI.—THE SALEABLE COMMODITY.

“ And who now implies that they have discredibly printed others [letters], because they are a saleable commodity.” Having relieved myself from the

* Who among us has not unsent letters in his possession ? I will relate an anecdote in illustration of this. Among the most beautiful of the letters of Sir James Mackintosh, contained in his Memoirs, is one on sculpture, which the editor publishes as sent to our great artist, Mr. Flaxman. Now I am assured by Miss Denman, the adopted daughter and executrix of Flaxman, that no such letter ever was received. It is too remarkable a composition, and came from too eminent a person, not to have been treasured up, and been the subject of conversation in the family. In the one case, as in the other, no doubt was entertained of the letter being actually sent. But how contrasted the act of publishing ! Mackintosh's admirable letter derived no value from the name on the superscription, and lost none, because it was unsent. Wilberforce's excellent letter was equally good, sent or unsent, with or without the name of the party addressed ; but in this case, the name, I fear, added a charm to it in the eyes of the publishers.

charge of imputing forgery to these reverend gentlemen, I have to meet another heinous accusation; and here my conscience does not so entirely acquit me: I must therefore do the best I can, confess my fault to its full extent, show how I was betrayed into the commission of it, and throw myself on the mercy of the court,—I mean the public.

I plead guilty to having alluded in half a line to a sentence or two in a Review. The passage appears elsewhere in this book, so mixed up with other matter that it might pass unnoticed, and I need not repeat it; but whoever looks for it will find it. In mitigation, I must state what I alluded to—a passage in the Quarterly. Never will I forgive that periodical for having got me into such a scrape, into which I was in part betrayed by considering that Review as the official patron of the friends and associates of the Rev. editors, over whom it would not fail, as I imagined, wherever it could, to throw the mantle of its protection. Having extracted a passage from the “Life,” stating that Mr. Wilberforce had ordered the destruction of his papers, it is added in the Review, “the editors admit that it is doubtful whether Mr. Wilberforce was *quite aware of the VALUE of the documents which he was then laying open.*” “There can be no doubt that Mr. Wilberforce did not think of any such value as the £4000 or £5000, which the newspapers say have been paid for the compilation of his memoranda.” The reviewer says, in another part, “it

is but candid to add, that the enormous price received by these gentlemen for *exposing to the public gaze what was so plainly of a confidential character* would make us, if we were to sit as judges in the cause, the more scrupulous in examining very rigidly their authority to publish them at all." And what renders all this the more remarkable is, that these allusions to the private dealings between the Messrs. Wilberforce and their publisher, Mr. Murray, appear in a review belonging to the same Mr. Murray. So that what the newspapers say acquires authority, and Mr. Murray himself becomes an accessory, if not before, at least after the fact, to this enormity; and yet—I beg the candid reader to remark—for anything that appears to the contrary, the Quarterly Review is forgiven: Mr. Murray is not only forgiven, he is embraced. The editors magnanimously overlook his offence; they condescend to renew their dealings with him; they do him the honour of suffering his name to appear on the same title-page with theirs, and to receive an *honorarium* from him to the tune of I know not how many more thousands. And yet on me, for a mere passing allusion to this, they inflict the severest punishment in their power, the very *peine capitale* among disputants; they won't even enter into controversy with me. This is not an impartial administration of penal justice; but it is a saying founded on popular experience, that it is safer for one man to steal a horse than for another to look over a hedge.

SECT. VII.—OF PUBLISHING CONFIDENTIAL LETTERS, AND GARBLING A CORRESPONDENCE.

“There is a pretty general opinion that these confidential papers should not have been promulgated.”—*Quarterly Review*.

“*Who distinctly charges them with garbling a whole correspondence.*” An inattentive reader might possibly interpret this as meaning, garbling all the letters of a correspondence, which it does not. I was not aware of having so distinctly made the charge; but I stated what I meant by such garbling in a long passage on the publication of confidential letters, in which also are some remarks on the *preservation* by Mr. Wilberforce of Mr. Clarkson's letters. I feel so strongly that the suggestions point out a growing evil of great enormity, that I will take the liberty of reprinting them here. And I do this the more readily, because I believe that this is the part of the Supplement which has more than any other part excited the wrath of the Messrs. Wilberforce, being at the same time the part least unworthy the reader's attention. They follow an exposure of the weakness of the apology made by the Edinburgh reviewer for the biographers' disclosure of confidential letters, of which the Preface contains their own. It is too feeble to need further refutation.

“This recklessness of conduct, covered, not concealed, by professions of sensibility, has been pressed upon me, with, I believe, no unfriendly intention. It has been said: The Edinburgh Review is a manifesto against Mr. Clarkson: and the preface to the

Life, in which the intention to publish more letters is avowed, is a sort of *threatening circular*. Since the Messrs. Wilberforce, without any provocation whatever, have published such letters as hitherto gentlemen have thought peculiarly sacred, what may they not do in anger, and under the pretext of personal vindication? During forty years Mr. Clarkson must have written many letters. (Mr. Clarkson himself says many hundreds.) And there are not only his own, but many thousands of letters, by common friends and acquaintances. With such copious materials for selection, through so long a course of years, what may not be found? Any thing and every thing may be made out of private letters with a little skill in arrangement, where there is a great deal of ill-will to stimulate, and no scrupulousness to restrain. When read with the honestest intentions, they are easily misunderstood. They present ample opportunities for misrepresentation. The hint, the irony, the playful exaggeration, the unavowed quotation, the allusion imperfectly given, the occasion unexplained, and other incidents peculiar to epistolary writings, render a simple letter a powerful instrument. There is still a remedy against the garbling a single letter. A sight of it may be demanded. But a whole correspondence may be garbled as well as a particular letter; and against this sort of garbling there is no remedy, as there are no means of detection. The half jocular, half serious allusion to eccentricities in one letter may be exhibited; the generous acknowledgment of virtues which put all eccentricities into shade in another letter, may be withheld; the petulant complaint may be shown, the frank confession of wrong concealed.

“The truth of all this has been felt; but Mr. Clarkson’s Strictures are now published, notwithstanding such intimations. Perhaps the Messrs. Wilberforce may have some friend sincere and bold enough to remind them that, by the course they have begun, and seem tempted to continue, they put the honour of Mr. Wilberforce in jeopardy. For these questions will obtrude themselves: Were these letters purposely preserved by Mr. Wilberforce during thirty long years, and while he continued to profess

esteem and affection for Mr. Clarkson, and did he intend that, in due season, they should be brought forward? Were they preserved through inadvertence, Mr. Wilberforce supposing he had destroyed them? Or were these more especially among the papers Mr. Wilberforce gave directions to have destroyed, and are they now made public in opposition to his will and express orders? The Messrs. Wilberforce alone can answer these questions. These are questions of family honour. It rests with them to vindicate themselves at the expense of their father's reputation, or at least make him a participator in whatever censure may be cast on them; or they may take the whole responsibility on themselves*.

"The same friend may suggest to them, that, in their portraiture of their father, they have shown almost as much anxiety to establish for him the character of a perfect gentleman as a perfect Christian; and it would be doing them great wrong not to think that they meant to emulate both kinds of excellence. I presume not to ask them what example they can find in any clergyman for such a course. I may ask, however, what gentleman—in birth, station, or fortune—ever before published such a letter as the one respecting the subscription? the writer being also a gentleman, and their father's friend, and alive to feel all the pain which their own ostentatious lamentations show they anticipate. Ever since letters have been a saleable commodity, needy men have been unscrupulous; but I am assured these gentlemen have no excuse of that kind, nor will I give credence to the sarcastic insinuations on this subject in the Quarterly Review.

"If however these gentlemen persist in the course they have begun, I hope that this good may follow from it to qualify the certain evil; that it may quicken the public sense to so clear a perception of the evil of such conduct as to lead to a cure. Already three classes of books are excluded from a large proportion of gentlemen's libraries;—works of obscenity, blasphemy, and mendacious libel. Let us hope that soon *Confidential Letters* published du-

* Vide, §. 9.

ring the life of the writer, or after his decease, without his permission or that of his representatives, may be placed under a like ban of proscription ; for to these may be fitly applied one of Coleridge's fine expressions : '*These are not the inventions, but the implements, of malice.*' I do not mean to suggest that this fourth class is of equal enormity with the three others ; yet in one respect it is even more mischievous than any of them. The authors of those works are so universally reprobated, that their bad fame deters from, and does not tempt to imitation ; but the stigma is not yet universally fixed on those who thus betray private confidence,—we may hope it soon will be ; and there is a numerous class of persons on whom the Life of Mr. Wilberforce may do permanent injury. It is precisely because the Messrs. Wilberforce are—the Messrs. Wilberforce, bear an honoured name, fill a certain station in society, and are objects of respect ; that their book is likely to do far greater injury to society than such a work for instance, as the '*Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth ;*' which, exciting only contempt, is harmless, when its nine days of annoyance to individuals and wonder to the multitude are passed away ; but as long as the Life of Mr. Wilberforce continues to be read, it will tend to weaken the bonds of social intercourse among the better classes of the community, and supply an apology for the gratification of the worst of passions. For 'if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' "

In the hope that these remarks will be deemed a *seasonable* exposure of an evil of great magnitude, I will now illustrate what I mean by garbling a whole correspondence, by copying a note, the subject of another attack by the editors, which refers to the letter already alluded to, viz. the letter which I believe the editors neither did nor could forge. It was under pretence of introducing that letter,

the worth of which was independent of the circumstances that occasioned it, that the editors extract passages from a single letter by Mr. Clarkson.

“So recently as the 12th of this month, the packet of letters lent to the Messrs. W. in 1834, was remitted to Mr. Clarkson’s order in town. Instead of forwarding it to Mr. C., I have ventured to make use of the letters on my own responsibility. One portion of them throws a very strong light on the conduct of the Messrs. W. in publishing those other confidential letters. If there be any person of honourable character and gentlemanly feeling beyond the limited circle of the Messrs. W.’s personal connections, who yet doubt how such conduct should be appreciated, such doubt will be removed by the facts which these letters disclose. The reader must bear in mind that the publication is justified (*Life*, vol. ii. p. 38.), as showing how the conduct of the abolition question involved Mr. W. in unpleasant correspondence; as showing how he was obliged to disappoint the expectations of those who had rendered assistance to the cause. ‘A single instance,’ they say, ‘illustrates his command of temper in such circumstances.’ Now, all this being recollected, the reader will feel some surprise when he learns that this packet, so coming out of the hands of the Messrs. W., contains eleven letters addressed to Lieutenant Clarkson, the gentleman in behalf of whom the application was made. These are written in such terms of affectionate familiarity, that six of the eleven are addressed, *My dear Admiral*; three, *My dear John*; two only, *My dear Sir*; but to these the epithet *affectionate* is applied at the close. They are full of warm praise, and express high regard. I can afford space for only two extracts, but they will decide the question how far Mr. C. was warranted in pressing his application. Mr. W. writes, 28th December, 1791,—‘I cannot help adding, though, were I silent on this head, I trust you would take it for granted, that *if I have any opportunity of serving you in the line of your profession, I shall be truly happy to embrace it.*’ John Clarkson being Lieutenant,

R.N.,—Mr. W. being the bosom friend of the prime minister, who was brother to the First Lord of the Admiralty!!! But the other extract is still stronger. He writes, 30th April, 1793,—‘I trust you do me the justice to believe me your affectionate friend,—such I hope I shall always approve myself; *and what I would do in the case of a brother or any near relation, that I would do in yours.*’ Satirists and men of the world tell us that such language means nothing when it flows from the tongue or pen of courtiers; I will not believe, however, that Mr. W. belonged to such a class. I was at first willing to believe that, after all, Mr. Wilberforce’s reproofing letter was never sent as written, and therefore hazarded this charitable conjecture,—that in good time he recollected how he had promised to his young friend the admiral and *quasi*-brother, and in such terms as to warrant any warmth of solicitation: that he, therefore, threw it aside unsent; but that, being an able exposition of the topic, he kept it by him as a form to be used on a more fitting occasion. The *sent* letter could not be in Mr. W.’s repository. And the letter itself suggests why he would not copy it, or show it to another:—‘I cannot argue the point with you at length; I have not leisure for this, and still less have I eyesight, for I need not say *this is a letter wherein I cannot employ my amanuensis.*’ And why not? Because he could not endure that even his confidential servant should know him to be capable of writing harshly to one he so much respected. But Mr. C.’s statement renders it probable that the letter was actually sent; I must however express my surprise that, with such a passage in the letter, his sons ventured to publish it to the whole world, needlessly inserting Mr. C.’s name after a *condonation* of nearly forty years’ continuance, and uninterrupted cordial intercourse to the time of the writer’s death.”

Now I leave it to the decision of the reader whether or not it partakes of the character of garbling a whole correspondence, as above explained,—the printing a single letter of urgent application,

concealing all the other letters, and all allusion to them, though in their actual possession, which go so far to apologize for the otherwise too pressing letter. The garbling is at least quite as clear as my charge was.

SECT. VIII.—REMUNERATION TO MR. WILBERFORCE.

"They cannot think it necessary to prove that when Mr. Wilberforce supplied the Abolition Committee with copies of his letter on the slave trade at cost price, he was not receiving REMUNERATION from a society to which he himself contributed." This seems obvious enough, and one wonders to read this stuck into a catalogue of mortal offences. But it is, like the rest of the note, a misrepresentation. My summary of the contents of the Abolition Society's books, as they affect Mr. Wilberforce, contains this short note:—

"I find a resolution of a Committee, 5th June, 1811, attended by Mr. Clarkson. 'That the sum of 83*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.* be applied to the discharge of Mr. Wilberforce's share with Mr. Cadell of the loss on his Letter on the Slave Trade, in such manner as can be most conveniently arranged with Mr. Cadell.'

"Here we find the committee volunteering to pay a debt of Mr. Wilberforce's, contracted by him in his zeal for the cause. I insert this for no other purpose than to show on what liberal principles the Committee acted, even towards a rich man like Mr. Wilberforce. This minute was known to the Messrs. Wilberforce when they so studiously represented it as discreditable to Mr. Clarkson, that he accepted of a reimbursement."

The Edinburgh Review having charged Mr. Clarkson with being remunerated for his services, because he accepted of a reimbursement of his money out of pocket from Mr. Wilberforce and others, I was amused when I read this entry in the books, because, according to the reviewer's logic, Mr. Wilberforce was remunerated when he allowed (as it may be presumed he did, though it is not stated that he did,) the Society to pay to Mr. Cadell Mr. Wilberforce's, that is the author's, share of the loss upon his letter on the slave trade. The editors either could not or would not understand the note. Mr. Murray would have explained it to them. Every publisher, and most authors, know to their cost what it means. But I beg the reader to notice the word *remuneration*. With scrupulous accuracy I relieved the biographers from the charge of representing Mr. Clarkson as one remunerated for his services; but here they take it on themselves, (for my note says *reimbursement*, not *remuneration*) perhaps in consciousness that they meant what the reviewer meant, though by accident, the word did not before find its way to their pens. The suggestion about cost price to the committee is a mere guess at the best. As far as I can judge, it has nothing to do with the entry in the books. Whether artfully or idly made, I have no means of knowing.

SECT. IX.—INSINUATIONS AGAINST MR. WILBERFORCE.

“C'est toi qui l'as nommé.”—PHEDRE.

“*Above all, they can enter into no controversy with one who has dared to insinuate that Mr. Wilberforce affectionately promised services which he never intended to perform,*” p. 75. I reserve for the completion of the sentence the conclusive remark, which at once refutes the whole, and here remark only on this special imputation, which the reader will have already noticed is directed against the note copied at length in a preceding section (7). That note was written with no intention to convey the imputed insinuation. It speaks for itself, and must justify itself. Fragments from Mr. Clarkson's confidential letter had been obtruded on the public, less, as was most sincerely surmised, to introduce Mr. Wilberforce's answer than to cast reproach on Mr. Clarkson. The letters of Mr. Wilberforce to the Lieutenant, on whose behalf the application was made, coming out of the editors' hands into mine, as they did, it would have been an act of despicable cowardice, if I had withheld documents so important in justifying Mr. Clarkson's letter, lest I should incur the imputation now raised; and it evinces a similar cowardice in those who fear, if they really fear, the unfair inferences that might be drawn by others against the writer. The apprehension thus betrayed is injurious to the honour which is to be protected by a suppression of them. Let me add,

with perfect sincerity and frankness, that I am well assured Mr. Wilberforce's reputation can sustain a disclosure like this. No single act ought to receive a construction that runs counter to a whole life; and I would certainly not charge Mr. Wilberforce with even a disposition to over-much protestation on account of any discrepancy between the single letter to Mr. Clarkson and the eleven letters to his brother the Lieutenant; but if the indiscreet activity of Mr. Wilberforce's sons were to provoke the publication of other like instances of inconsiderate writing, the reputation he enjoyed through life might be seriously endangered by such posthumous discoveries.

I will take leave, in illustration of this subject, and that of a former section, to make an extract from an admirable letter which I had the honour to receive from a noble and learned lord, acknowledging a presentation copy of what he is pleased to call the joint work of Mr. Clarkson and myself; a compliment I do not deserve. His name would do honour to this little volume, but I will practise the self-denial of withholding it, because, though he afterwards obligingly declared his letter to be at the service of Mr. Clarkson and his friends, yet, as I am aware that he wrote merely to express his feelings of respect and admiration for Mr. Clarkson, whom he had never even seen, I deem it more decorous to avail myself of his pen rather than his name.

“The present discussion makes it difficult to abs-

tain from observing on many topics that are connected with it. On the *publication* of private letters your remarks will meet general concurrence. But I cannot help thinking that another remark is due to that subject, which even our respect for the late Mr. Wilberforce would not authorise us to suppress. It applies not only to several of Clarkson's letters, but also to one written by Wilberforce himself, on which you have offered some conjectures, and which Lord Brougham (to whom I first pointed it out) justly calls beautiful. I must say that the *preservation* of such letters appears to me a breach of social duty." Here his Lordship unhesitatingly uses words of censure, which can fall from no lips with greater force, or more becomingly, and applies them equally to all. The preservation of such letters appears to him a "breach of social duty." But these words imply no reproach (independently of that which I fear we all more or less incur, in neglecting to destroy papers that ought to be exposed to no risk,) beyond that which is not a heinous offence in a father, that he did not sufficiently know the character of his own sons. He gave them, as they have confessed, orders to destroy all confidential papers, and he did not anticipate the possibility of their disobeying him, and *so* disobeying him. But were even this smaller reproach unmerited, and were the name of Mr. Wilberforce to be, in consequence, affected with any other undeserved censure, the reproach must be shared between those who suffered

their minds to be unduly affected, and the inconsiderate sons who rendered the disclosure which led to the censure, a mere act of duty.

“*And harboured and transmitted schemes of secret vengeance, where, for years, he simulated friendship.* (p. 89.)” Such allegations are their own best corrective. And such is the fit termination of a note in which I believe is compressed a greater number of misrepresentations, within a single page, than ever appeared under the sanction of two reverend names; but of all their imputations, this is the most insidious, the most discreditable, happily also at the same time the most incredible. There was an ancient, and now obsolete practice in the administration of our English law, according to which the oath of a party was allowed to be proof, if he could obtain the oath of eleven compurgators that they believed him. Now I will, in imitation of this practice, make the venerable Archdeacon a liberal offer. If he will procure the written declaration of three priests in full orders within his archdeaconry, that they believe him and his brother to be sincere in the interpretation they put on the note I am about to copy, I will believe them too.

In the returned packet referred to in a former note were five letters addressed to Mr. Clarkson.

“From one, dated 19th January, 1826, I extract the introductory sentence as further illustrative of the *candour* with which the biographers bring forward Mr. Clarkson as an *example* and *instance* of persons annoying Mr. W. by impertinent and unwarrantable solicitation. ‘No man living can have a stronger claim than yourself to any service I can render in any cause of a bene-

volent nature, because no man has laboured with such unabated energy.' To prevent a misapprehension, I add that this application does not appear to have respected Mr. C. or any personal connection. 'I am glad to find you are able (your willingness! I had no fear of its not holding out to the last) to continue your exertions on the scale you do.'

"He wrote another letter on the 27th March, 1826, full of very interesting and confidential opinions on the great measure of emancipation then before parliament. Mr. C. had been among the first to rouse the nation to a sense of the iniquity of suffering Slavery to remain, as he was among the first, forty-one years before, to excite the public to a just sense of the horrors of the Slave Trade. At the close of his letter Mr. W. thus solemnly records his sense of Mr. Clarkson's recent services: '*I congratulate you on the success of your endeavours to call the public voice into action. It is that which has so greatly improved our general credit in the House of Commons, FOR IT IS YOUR DOING, UNDER PROVIDENCE.*'

"It occurred to me, on casting my eye over these repeated expressions of cordial affection, to ask myself, but not in doubt, Is it possible, that, after all, these are but words of course, and that Mr. W. did in reality nourish feelings of secret disesteem and resentment at an imagined depreciation of himself? The Quarterly reviewer, in his masterly article, in which pungency of talent is not weakened by the infusion of a very copious portion of indulgence and kindness, remarks that the *Life* is a sort of autobiography. If so, it may be thought by some that the authors, in thus seeking to dissociate the name of Clarkson from that of Wilberforce, except in the relation of dependency and subserviency, may be executing a secret trust, discharging an office of filial duty, offering a sacrifice to the manes of their parent. We may be told hereafter, Our father charged us to bide our time. He bore with Mr. C. forty years for the sake of the cause, and admonished us to do the same, if necessary. 'Clarkson's services,' he said, 'are for the present indispensable. He has besides with him a party in the country—the Quakers and Dissenters, nearly to a man; you must

not break with him till he is no longer wanted. But when once the African cause is out of jeopardy, when emancipation is secured, then you may redress my wrongs.' ”

Had I terminated my note here, I should not have feared to leave it to the construction of every intelligent man ; but as if I had been aware of a disposition to pervert its object, I added these words :—

“ I would not suffer this sentence to remain, if I thought a single man could read it through without perceiving, that I pen it merely to suggest the dilemma in which the biographers are placed. Either this is a correct imagination—then they fix on their father’s memory the reproach of *consummate hypocrisy* ; or the contrary is true—and then their father must be considered as in spirit mourning over and condemning their conduct.”

The reader will remark, that I use here the same form of writing which I above employed in commenting on the preservation of Mr. Clarkson’s confidential letters in the “*Strictures*,” p. 112, above, p. 38, placing the biographers between the horns of a dilemma. It is essential to such a form of composition that the writer leaves the party he is exposing to fix himself on the horn he pleases. Were the writer himself to determine the alternative, it would cease to be one. When it is said to sons, who are writing in the tone, not of apologists, but of almost idolatrous eulogists, of their father, that a given act must bring reproach on them or him, it is expected that they will heroically sacrifice their fame to his. I admit that in these cases the writer’s own opinion, though it cannot be formally stated,

ought not to be doubtful; nor is it to be for an instant doubted in this case. For what purpose were the "Strictures" of Mr. Clarkson written? Is it against Mr. Wilberforce or his sons that he appeals to the public? He has terminated his "Strictures" by a sentence of touching beauty and simplicity. After copying the last letter written by Mr. Wilberforce to him only a few months before his death, he says,—

"I shall not add a word to this letter. It records the *last private* expression of feeling, as the report of the meeting at the Freemasons' Tavern records the *last public* expression of his opinion concerning me. The recollection of this feeling, and of this opinion, sufficiently consoles me under the indignities cast on me by his sons. I appeal with satisfaction from the judgment of the living Robert and Samuel Wilberforce to the recorded sentiments of the deceased William Wilberforce."

And it is supposed that I, in a "Supplement" to this book, written as the author's friend, in support of his cause, mean, when I declare a given act to prove either that Mr. Wilberforce was a hypocrite, or that his sons were acting in opposition to their father's will, that the public should decide against Mr. Wilberforce, and in their favour! I am to be understood as wishing to cast disgrace on his memory, merely for the purpose of saving them from disgrace! Really this is a mode of putting the question which takes me by surprise: its novelty is equal to its ingenuity. I confess, however, that it is too late for me now to urge my higher opinion of their father than of them, if it does not also ap-

pear in what I wrote, of the "Supplement." As I cannot copy the whole of it, I can only challenge the Messrs. Wilberforce to produce from the parts not reprinted here, a single word which insinuates disesteem for their father, or esteem for themselves. So far from holding them up as bearing his character as well as his name, I did not hesitate to exhibit them as presenting a contrast to his character. And in the concluding paragraph of my reply to the Edinburgh Review, I abandoned the alternative form, and expressly decided what, in the quoted paragraph, is left in form doubtful. I have heard that some worthy, but too sensitive persons, have taken offence at the Scriptural allusion; but it expresses so much, that I must even repeat it. Speaking of that great and most characteristic quality of Mr. Clarkson's mind, inexhaustible perseverance, I say,—

"This last quality, and I believe his other virtues, were recognised by Mr. Wilberforce. In his letter of Jan. 1826, he expressed his joy at Mr. Clarkson's power of continued exertion. The willingness he knew would last to the end. In this he foresaw truly. But this he did not, happily for his own repose, foresee—that when that end—the end of slavery—should arrive, and the perfect triumph of emancipation be achieved, Mr. Clarkson would not be permitted to contemplate the victory with undisturbed joy; that he who had so often fought by his side, would then have to gird up his loins to a personal defence against the sons of his old leader and comrade; and that those sons, his own sons, would combine their powers in heaping sarcasm and insult upon his aged friend, and would hunt out materials amid a mass of disregarded papers which had been accumulated for thirty years. Had Mr. Wilberforce foreseen this, and that this would

be proclaimed to the world as assisting to establish his own just title to renown; he would have exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart, '*Rid me and deliver me from strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity.*'"

Since this whole imputation is founded on a real or affected ignorance of the nature of a dilemma, and an alternative accusation, I will close this section by remarking, that the very charge against me illustrates the thing itself. In accusing me of meaning in those cited passages to spread insinuations against their father's integrity, they either say deliberately what they know to be incorrect; or they betray an ignorance of the very forms of composition, not creditable to men of letters who have sent into the world 30,000 volumes at one bout, besides sundry other writings which I cannot pretend to enumerate.

SECT. X.—HOW TO MAKE AN APOLOGY.

"Repent old pleasures, and solicit new.—POPE."

Every sentence of the Note has now passed under review, except a parenthetical expression of respect for Mr. Clarkson. I rejoice in being no longer even the occasion of any further exposure. I next proceed to show the weakness of Messrs. Wilberforce when they attempt to defend themselves. The vindication of Mr. Clarkson is unshaken; and an exposure of them as apologists will serve, among other purposes, to illustrate how very near an apology may be to an insult.

I waive, therefore, following them in a rather obscure discussion of some very minute contradictions between their "Life" and Mr. Clarkson's "History;" but I must be allowed to observe upon their remark, that "they rejoice to think that there are but two of their statements of fact which Mr. Clarkson controverts." They mistake the source of their joy. Whatever self-satisfaction they may feel must arise from their want of memory and reflection. They have forgotten that in the Note on the "Life" (I. p. 141), they had the boldness to say that Mr. Clarkson's History conveys an *entirely erroneous idea* of the Abolition struggle; that he had been led unawares into *numberless misstatements*, and that they would tell their own story, but declined pointing out its *contradictions* of Mr. Clarkson's History. Having been before admonished on this subject, they were bound either to retract or to justify these unbecoming assertions; and when they find now that there is so little disagreement between their statements and the "History" they so contemptuously treated, this ought to be the occasion not of joy but of shame. It was not Mr. Clarkson who denied the truth of their narrative, but they who denied the truth of his; and being challenged to particularise their contradictions, and prove their own assertions, their silence must be considered as a withdrawing of all those charges. In this respect as well as others, the "Strictures" have effected their object. An express acknowledgment would

have been more graceful, but that lies not in the nature of these gentlemen : but, as they remark, when the " points of no considerable interest " are settled, " a long account remains behind," I will do my best to assist in adjusting it. It is one on which the Messrs. Wilberforce owed much apology for gratuitous insult. I fear it will be seen that they have left the whole debt undischarged, if it be not augmented.

In this part of the Preface will be found sentiments strangely at variance. This may be partly attributable to the fact that these works profess to be the production of two writers. I have been struck by a great inequality of talent in the different parts of the " Life," and great contrariety of sentiment in this Preface ; so that I should think that the writer of certain passages, remarkable for a want of meaning and connection, could hardly see the drift of other passages which evince great subtlety and address. But this is mere speculation ; and as I do not affect to know any thing of these gentlemen but as writers of these books, in which they profess to be joint, not several ;—and as a literary, like a commercial firm, involves the partners in equal responsibility ; I shall consider them as alike responsible even for those parts of the apology which so closely resemble insult as to be hardly distinguishable from it, as well as for the more flagrant aggressions which I have already laid before the reader, and which it would be satisfactory to believe ema-

nated from only one understanding, and, consolatory to think, were permitted by only one conscience.

In the sentence of the Note not yet commented upon, the writers declare their constant wish to speak of Mr. Clarkson "with the respect his services and age command." The first sentence in the Preface also proclaims their desire to avoid controversy with a man "to whom age and past services give so just a title to respect." And the offensive letter of Mr. Robert Wilberforce in 1834, is said to have proceeded from their sense of what was "due to his age and services." *Age and services*, combined in this off-hand way, are a form of speech peculiarly appropriate to a Greenwich or Chelsea pensioner, and indicate, if not a deliberate intention to insult, at least an utterly inability to appreciate. It is not merely because Mr. Clarkson is an aged man that the treatment he has received from the Messrs. Wilberforce is discreditable to them. In his very youth he had earned all the honours usually conferred on age. His great practical talents and indefatigable perseverance had enabled him to force on the British public a knowledge of the impolicy as well as guilt of the Slave Trade; he had constructed the Society that ultimately effected the Abolition, and had wrought all his more arduous labours when scarcely of the age of his present assailants. Few are the veterans who can count so many battles as he had then been engaged in! He is an object now, not of praise, but of congratulation, for being able in 1840

to preside over public bodies whose existence sprung out of the Society he formed in 1787. A sentiment of reverence for old age, crowning a youth like Mr. Clarkson's, will be felt by every delicate and honourable mind ; but the officiously obtruding that age on the attention, as if it were a merit, and the chief merit, is both insidious and scornful. The reference to it at any time may proceed from a compassionate sense of the infirmities of our common nature. It may be a mere pharisaic affectation of humanity. In either case, it is compatible with a feeling of no respect, and implies, when dwelt upon thus emphatically, a very slight degree of it.

In these passages, however, age is combined with services ; but as there is no merit in mere age, so there is a kind of services so low, that while they are acknowledged they are barely respected. One of the topics pressed in the "Supplement," is the manner in which the biographers and their reviewer alike noticed the services of Mr. Clarkson.

"It is not disputed that, at the commencement of the great struggle, no man equalled him in zeal and activity, and in the variety of his labours. So overwhelming were his exertions, that his life was saved only by his retirement. These labours are, indeed, by no means denied. In the *Life* they are, as in the *Review*, frequently adverted to ; but with such accompaniments as to render Mr. Clarkson just as grateful for them as Bentley and the other scholars were to Pope, for his acknowledgment of their merits :—

" ' Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence '—
when it served to point the satire,

" ' And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.' "

"In another portion of the Review, the sufferings of Mr. Wilberforce at the retirement of Mr. Clarkson from the Committee, is mentioned even pathetically; but the passage, interpreted by the rest of the article, expresses no more than the grief of the Head of the house when the old clerk is forced to retire, who worked so hard and was so attached to the firm. There is a dispensation, according to which they who humble themselves shall be exalted; but the humbler services of Mr. Clarkson are brought forward only in such a way as to leave an impression that all his merit lay in these alone."

Had there been an honourable desire to supply a mere deficiency and correct an inadvertency, in this as in other particulars pointed out, care would have been taken to use words which recognise Mr. Clarkson's higher intellectual labours,—something beyond the mere servile offices of an underling. *Of this there is not a word.* There are, it is true, expressions of kindness, as there were in the "Life" and Review; and these I am willing, as far as possible, to consider as the expression of the better feelings that linger in the hearts of the Reverend editors. But these must be understood in a sense reconcilable with the rest of the Preface, and of all they and their friend have written. They first answer the charge of want of respect, of which Mr. Clarkson "complains, in feeling language;" and they begin by "the most entire denial of having ever entertained any such thought or intention as that of vilifying Mr. Clarkson." But such a denial is quite consistent with this explanation, That they never meant to represent Mr. Clarkson meaner or lower

than he really is. They then say, "They would add the sincere assurance of their hearty regret that a single word which could be so interpreted has found its way into their pages, and their full determination to alter, in the next edition of the 'Life,' every expression which he has pointed out as wearing that appearance."

I would not apply to ordinary writers remarks that might be thought to savour of special pleading ; but looking even at this sentence, the only one which contains some intimation of a consciousness of having erred, I do not find an unequivocal and distinct admission that they had written what it did not become them to write. For they say, in what I without vanity call my Note, "that they have ever wished to speak of Mr. Clarkson with the respect which his services and age command," which is, in effect, a denial of what they seem here to confess ; unless they mean that there was nothing in his services and age to call for a repression of a heartless and miserable sarcasm which I pointed out, not Mr. Clarkson, and which, therefore, is not comprehended in their promise to alter ; for they carefully distinguish all that he says from what I have said. This sarcasm I noticed in combination with the contemptuous treatment of Mr. Clarkson by the reviewer. He had artfully introduced a eulogy of Mr. Wilberforce, so as by implication to insinuate contempt of Mr. Clarkson.

"It was within the reach of ordinary talents to collect, to ex-

*amine, and to digest evidence, and to prepare and distribute popular publications ; but it required a mind,' &c. It is notorious that the faculty of systematic and continuous labours was pre-eminently Mr. Clarkson's; and what follows is meant to be a summary of his merits and claims to distinction. Were it conceded that his were ordinary talents, it would not follow that he was an ordinary man. Greatness lies, not in what a man has, but in what he is. Of this hereafter; for the present, I beg that the reviewer's choice phrase may not be overlooked. The merit of distributing (as a hawker and pedlar might do) publications is put on a level with preparing them. This is, however, surpassed by a precious sarcasm in the Life. It is said (vol. i. p. 230), speaking of Mr. Clarkson's first journey to Paris, '*Mirabeau withstood a bribe in his zeal for abolition, and the amiable Louis gave a no less emphatic pledge of favour in his unwearied perusal of one of Mr. Clarkson's volumes.*'"*

And I added to some observations on Mr. Clarkson's literary pretensions the following:—

"The style of Mr. Clarkson's writings may be abandoned to the sneers of Messrs. Wilberforce and their friend, and the talent these exhibit may be as ordinary as they please; but surely it behoved these gentlemen not entirely to overlook in what estimation Mr. Wilberforce held them, and what their effect was. It is of one of these 'prepared and circulated' popular publications that Mr. Wilberforce wrote—*it is your doing under Providence!!* It is true, Providence works by *ordinary talents* as well as by brilliant genius; but it is not usual for those who deeply venerate the beneficent dispensations of Providence to delight in depreciating its chosen instrument."

The attention of the editors was thus drawn to these affronts, and I should have been better pleased had they distinctly confessed that these and the like

writings were culpable. For it is still in their power to say,—That with all Mr. Clarkson's merits, these sarcasms were still not undeserved; and that any alteration will be rather an act of favour and good nature on their parts than of justice to him. As to the alterations in the next edition of the "Life," this promise is as safe as the oaths of ladies who swear by their beards are, according to our friend Touchstone. It is notorious that the 30,000 volumes have glutted the book-market; and whatever effect the sneers of the Messrs. Wilberforce may have, will be very slightly corrected by any alterations.

What the reader will not forget, when he considers this the only sentence savouring of apology, is this—that in the whole Preface there is nowhere to be found an unequivocal acknowledgment which might assure us that the beautiful confession which is periodically on their lips, when they commence the solemn service of their office, is also in their hearts when Mr. Clarkson is brought to their recollection.

Connected with this apology is an attempt to justify Mr. Robert Wilberforce's letter to Mr. Clarkson in 1834. They accuse Mr. Clarkson of a remarkable unintended misquotation, and "strange perversion of words." Mr. Clarkson's interpretation will be found indisputably just. But what renders this charge almost ludicrous is, that it is itself founded on a misquotation, unawares I have no doubt. They say, p. xvii., that Mr. Wilberforce's letter "closes with an assurance that the statement should

be made 'in a manner *as far as possible*' (*quam longissimè*) from all insult and unkindly feeling. How strangely is this unfeignedly respectful assurance turned by Mr. Clarkson into a declaration that the book was 'to contain as little insult as possible' (*sic*), and again to implying that all insult could not be avoided!" The editors will be as surprised as I was when I discovered my mistake about the entry in the books, and would be as much annoyed if they were equally sensitive, when they find that their two pair of eyes have played them quite as false as my single pair of eyes did; for the passage they quote from ("Strictures," p. 7.) is not *as far as possible*, but *as free as possible* from all insult, of which *quam longissimè* is a strange translation.

It is incomprehensible to me how these gentlemen can reconcile such a word as insult with a "respectful assurance." Mr. Clarkson's interpretation is the only possible one, and *far*, with its *quam longissimè*, would not much aid them; for had the feeling been as far off as it ought, the word could not have occurred to them. It is the *word*, not the construction of the sentence as a form of expression (that admits of either sense undoubtedly), that determines the meaning. Real respect would have dictated such words as these: "Be assured this shall be done with all possible consideration and respect."

Finally, and which stamps with a character that seems to me indelible, their real sentiments towards Mr. Clarkson:—In addition to the absence of all

confession of wrong, they have (undeterred by remonstrances, which their subsequent conduct shows not to have been superfluous, and which I have reprinted, on the enormity of using a repository of private papers as an armoury of offensive weapons) added, what shall I say, this menace, or insinuation? "*The amount of their forbearance in all cases which are truly private can be known only to themselves. Mr. Clarkson himself would have no reason for satisfaction could he have piqued them into publishing what they deemed it better to suppress.*" In these few words is contained substantially a reiteration of what is most offensive in the "Life," and a retraction of whatever in the Preface looks like respect. I say respect, for as to mere kindness or good will, that partakes of an eleemosynary character, which, though Mr. Clarkson might consent to receive it, his friends, on his behalf, must protest against. The writers may disclaim this interpretation of their words; they may say, we did not mean this, or we did mean that; such explanations come too late. When such insinuations are scattered abroad, they can never be gathered up and called in again.

Having thus taken into consideration all that has a show of apology in the Preface, mixed up as it is with baser matter, I will now close this subject by a remark in the diplomatic language formerly so much in use, and that is, that it behoves the friends of Mr. Clarkson to consider, not so much what "indemnity for the past," as what "security for the fu-

ture" requires, in order to protect him now and his good name hereafter from outrage. If the subject of the dispute between him and the Messrs. Wilberforce were, not his honour and character, but a few miserable pounds, and there were a suit in equity, a judge would compel the Messrs. Wilberforce to deposit on oath at the Master's office all Mr. Clarkson's letters, for the inspection of himself or his authorized agent, with a power to copy or make extracts; and he has an indisputable right to demand what would be equivalent with this. The inspection is so manifestly his right, that if the Messrs. Wilberforce, even without a formal demand, do not volunteer the offer, they will justify the most serious surmises. The letters, especially, from which they have made extracts, they cannot with any decency withhold. He has suggested that they probably obtained a knowledge of Mr. Wilberforce's complaint of a supposed neglect of Mr. Stephen from his own letter explaining that circumstance ("Strictures," p. 59.): and he adds, with characteristic simplicity, "It would be idle in me to call on them to publish it. I am sure that of my numerous letters in their possession, they are ready to publish all that they think discreditable to me, and withhold all that does me honour." There is much that I cannot comprehend in these gentlemen, and among other causes of wonder is this, that a reproach so impressive in its gentleness did not at once produce

that very offer, to allow an inspection of all Mr. Clarkson's letters to some authorized friend of his.

SECT. XI.—THE CHART AND THE TABULAR VIEW.

There is an inconvenience attending the noticing a frivolous and paltry objection; that the notice itself assumes a character of frivolousness and paltriness; but when the artifice is practised of using big words in order to conceal the littleness of what is dextrously kept out of sight, there is no other expedient; the thing must be shown as it is. In justifying Mr. Robert Wilberforce's letter, on the ground that Mr. Clarkson's "History" was derogatory to their father, the editors speak of the long consultations they held on the subject, and that it was impressed on them by friends, that they could not "escape from the necessity of protesting against what had been commonly supposed to be the general drift of the History of the Abolition." There is added this note (xvi.): "This impression was undoubtedly confirmed by the position given to Mr. Clarkson's name in the chart which accompanies the History of the Abolition; a position which, *after being silently allowed to it for thirty years, is now happily admitted to have been an error of the engraver*, and has been altered in the recent edition." Every line of this note is deceptive. I have some compensation for the trouble of this exposure in the circumstantial evidence it

supplies of the concert between the authors and their friend the Edinburgh Reviewer, whom I must suppose to have been a party to this consultation, and one of those impressing friends. It is quite certain that the chart was known to them then, and why otherwise was the reference made to it here? It naturally occurs to ask, why this fact was carefully left out of the "Life"? The answer is obvious: they would have had no excuse for omitting to prove the charge by inserting a fac-simile of this injurious position of the name in the chart. The expense could have been afforded out of Mr. Murray's thousands. Why not? A fac-simile would have shown the paltriness of the charge. Therefore, the biographers prudently said nothing, and, as I conjecture, left this to their advocate. In the Review the fac-simile could not be expected; therefore, instead, this ostentatious paragraph was inserted:—

"Mr. Clarkson has claimed for himself a place in the history of this great measure, which affords no light countenance to the pretensions thus preferred in his behalf. In a map prefixed to his History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, that gigantic evil is represented under the image of a mound placed at the confluence of four rivers, whose united force is bearing it away. Of these streams one takes, near its source, the name of Clarkson, into which the rivulet of Wilberforce is seen to fall much lower down. *His sons reclaim against this hydrography,*

and propose to correct the map by converting the tributary flood into the main channel."

I considered the charge so very frivolous that I would not even copy this verbose passage into the "Supplement," and abridged the answer inserted in the Eclectic Review. I regret that the adoption of it by the editors obliges me, for a third time, to notice so insignificant a circumstance. The map exhibits a great number of little rivulets running into channels: each of these has a name. No name is given to a channel, except that of Dellwyn, because he was the medium of communication between the American and English abolitionists. According to the map, neither Clarkson nor Wilberforce could be a main channel. To one of the shortest rivulets is put Clarkson's name, which is printed as small as the other names; but, by mere accident, nearer the stream than the rivulet. It does not catch the eye, and unless the name were referred to the rivulet, there would be a rivulet without a name; and no one who did not want to see a design in it could find it. This I have said already; and the editors, in renewing the charge, should have given the evidence which was in their power. Instead of this, they support it by observations very frivolous when examined. They say it has been "*silently allowed* for thirty years." For thirty years there has been no new edition of the book. But neither Mr. Clarkson nor myself admits any serious error worth correction. There has been an

alteration in the new plate so minute, as to be scarcely perceived ; and to this Mr. Clarkson was no party. I am informed that the publisher of the new edition sent to beg the old plate ; it could not be found, or it would have been used. Had I been aware of the intention to make any change in the plate, I should have warned the new publisher of the advantage that would certainly be taken of the circumstance.

But since the chart used by Mr. Clarkson has been thus insidiously commented upon, I will advert to the parallel tabular view published by the biographers in the "Life," than which nothing can be imagined better calculated to mislead, and convey erroneous notions. This table has the double title, "*Tabular view of the Abolition of Slavery, illustrative of the Life of William Wilberforce.*" I select three items.

"1773. Mr. Wilberforce writes against the Slave Trade from Pocklington School."

"1785. Dr. Peckard proposes the Slave Trade as the subject for an Essay at Cambridge. The Prize is gained by Thomas Clarkson."

"1787. Wilberforce avows his design of moving for Abolition. Abolition Committee formed. Thomas Clarkson employed to collect evidence."

In the first place ; a more insignificant incident in its effect on the Abolition cannot be imagined than Mr Wilberforce's school-boy letter. Nobody knows, out of the family at least, and perhaps not even

there, to whom it was written; or whether it was ever read by any one but his mama.

Mr. Clarkson's Prize Essay was an event rather than a work; and one of incalculable importance, by which the fate of millions of human beings has been affected. It was not like Wilberforce's letter, —a mere evidence that a child had heard some sad story that affected him; but it was an incident which fixed the powers of a very vigorous mind to one great action. But for this accident (humanly speaking), those powers would have found some other field of arduous philanthropic enterprise.

It may be said: The letter illustrates at least the Life of Mr. Wilberforce: but, on that principle, why introduce, in the year 1787, "Thomas Clarkson employed to collect evidence"? How is Mr. Clarkson's being employed an incident in Mr. Wilberforce's life? It can have been inserted here for no object but to fix that injurious impression on the reader. This same item is further deceptive in this: Mr. Wilberforce "*avows his design of moving*," as if the whole scheme of Abolition originated in him; as if it lay an embryo in his breast when a school-boy in 1773, and was quickened into action and a public avowal twelve years afterwards; as if it was on his design being avowed that the Committee was formed and Mr. Clarkson employed!!! An historically-correct item in a summary of the Abolition history would be,—

1787. The Abolition Committee, which Clarkson had formed, invite Wilberforce to undertake their cause in the House of Commons, and he consents.

I very much lament that a misrepresentation of a sentence requires pages to expose. But the exposure goes beyond the mere sentence; the spirit in which it is written is exposed also, and that is the spirit of the "Life."

SECT. XII.—THE SUBSCRIPTION LETTER.

I shall not go again into the *matter* of the subscription. The attempted justification of this breach of trust is too feeble to shake any of the conclusions to which the public have come; but I deem it useful to expose the palpable contradictions of the apology in the Preface. In p. xx. they remark, that as the Abolition was a public matter, "*how the needful funds for its conduct were obtained,*" is a question of general interest. But the subscription was not for the conduct of the Abolition, but for a reimbursement of a private outlay.

They are next driven to make a disclosure by a troublesome suggestion in the Eclectic Review. I said, "We are merely told that £1500 were raised; what portion by Mr. Wilberforce does not appear. Either Mr. Wilberforce left a note of his own contribution, which his biographers thought it expedient to conceal; or he himself concealed the

transaction together." In unavowed allusion to this they say, "They found themselves in possession of papers *establishing an event of historical importance* (!!!) which, if it had not esaped Mr. Wilberforce's memory, had, to their knowledge, never escaped his lips." At least, then, Mr. Wilberforce thought this an event of no historical importance; but we have a singular combination of strange circumstances. Here is a revered father carefully keeping a profound secret from his own children during a long life; not only never opening his lips to them, but to secure their silence, ordering them to destroy his private papers; and they who make this known, do not see how they act contrary to his will in seeking for his secret among those papers, and in publishing what their father would have deemed it dishonourable in himself to make known; nor do they see that, after betraying their own act of disobedience, they do not make known the very fact which they represent to be so important. They say, indeed, "They deemed it necessary to show, fully and throughout, the nature of their father's contributions." And yet they, after all, do not inform us *what* portion of the £1500 was subscribed by Mr. Wilberforce; or does the *amount*, in the opinion of these gentlemen, constitute no part of this nature? Whether Mr. Wilberforce subscribed 5*l.*, 50*l.*, or 500*l.*, nowhere appears.

In a tone of what I must call affected candour, they add, "But they cannot allow that the mere ac-

ceptance of such reimbursement implied anything injurious to the character of Mr. Clarkson." They know very well that it is not the *mere acceptance* of the subscription, but his letters, which constituted his offence. . This subject is closed by the denial of what they were not charged with,—the accusing Mr. Clarkson of expecting remuneration. Lord Brougham, in his letter to Mr. Clarkson, has truly said, "Any attempt to represent you as a person at all mindful of his own interest would be much too ridiculous to give anybody but yourself a moment's uneasiness."

It is not undeserving of observation, that it is in this part of the Preface, that, in happy unconsciousness of having exposed themselves to such animadversions as these, they honour the compiler with this passing notice. Congratulating themselves on their wisdom in making a "*guarded extract*" from Mr. Clarkson's letters, and in using the "very words of the original documents," they say, "Even as it is, the charges of falsehood and forgery have been darkly hinted against them. For these indeed they little care. Such is ever the reception of *unpalatable truths* by *minds of a certain class*." I am very willing that the class to which my mind belongs should be determined, and the soundness of my moral palate should be judged of, by the disgust I felt at what these gentlemen please to call *truths*.

SECT. XIII.—SOUTHEY'S LETTER.

Knowest thou who best such gratitude may claim?
 Clarkson, I answer'd, first; whom to have seen
 And known in social hours may be my pride,
 Such friendship being praise; and one I ween
 Is Wilberforce, placed rightly at his side, &c.

SOUTHEY.

My distrust of the Messrs. Wilberforce, when they select from their father's papers, is increased by the use I perceive they are capable of making of the letters addressed to themselves, and especially by what I believe to be an *abuse* of the honoured name of Mr. Southey. I am not in a condition formally to charge them with garbling his letter, but I avow my suspicions, and will submit the reasons to the consideration of the reader.

The reference to Mr. Southey is in a passage which will receive its explanation in the following section :—

“ Why should this complaint have been made by Mr. Clarkson rather than by any other of those numerous and respected friends, except from that peculiarity in Mr. Clarkson which was long since noticed in the ‘Christian Observer,’ then under the direction of Zachary Macaulay*, as having led Mr. Clarkson to become his own biographer under the general title of Historian of the Abolition? Some of Mr. Clarkson's truest friends have not been induced by recent clamour to forget this truth. ‘What,’ asked Mr. Southey, after critically reading the Life of Wilberforce, and giving to it the high praise, that ‘it could not possibly have

* Christian Observer, No. 169.

been better done'—'What shall I say of Thomas Clarkson? That nothing of this sort would have happened if, at the first, he had followed my advice.' That advice Mr. Southey goes on to specify as having been the professed publication of *Passages in Mr. Clarkson's Life*, instead of a *History of the Abolition*. Mr. Clarkson had been the foremost figure of the group in his own history of Abolition. The charge, '*They do not notice me*' [Strictures 63], is really little more than a complaint that he is not equally conspicuous in the biography of Wilberforce."—p. xxiv.

It will be borne in mind that the honour rendered to Mr. Clarkson by the praise of Mr. Southey* is gravely alleged among the reasons to justify the publication of Mr. Clarkson's most confidential letters. Praise by Mr. Southey is fame; and the object of the editors, therefore, in picking these words out of some letter from Mr. Southey, is strictly defamatory, for they are supposed to show that Mr. Southey entertains some sentiments towards Mr. Clarkson, which recent clamour might have induced him to forget. With such an object, the extract should not have commenced with a "*this sort*." The inquiring reader will ask, *what* that sort was; while the intelligent reader will marvel how Mr. Southey's advice to Mr. Clarkson, to write portions of his own life, proves that Mr. Southey thought him a man culpably or ridiculously prone to self-praise or self-contemplation. Such counsel was flattering the vice or nourishing the infirmity Mr. Southey is supposed to have censured or lamented.

* "The great names of Wordsworth and Southey."—Edinburgh Review.

But the friends of Mr. Southey will find in this, matter for more serious animadversion. Their anxiety has been long excited by the state of his health, which renders it exceedingly improbable that he should have expressed any critical opinion of Mr. Wilberforce's *Life* which recent clamour could possibly have affected. The remote friends of Mr. Southey will regret that the editors did not publish a date, which might have relieved their disquietude.

But, which is far more conclusive than mere speculation, I have now in my possession two letters, which I had the pleasure to receive from Mr. Southey, on the subject of this same "*Life*," the one dated 17th June, 1838, and the other 20th July, 1838, which are at variance with the inferences which the editors wish the reader to draw from the mutilated extracts of his letter. My high respect for Mr. Southey will not permit me to give publicity to his letters, until a happy renovation of his strength permit my applying to him for his consent to my doing so, unless, unhappily, those letters should acquire the character of historical evidence: but I am ready to show them to any man of character and honour whom I believe Mr. Southey would select as the fit participator of his friendly communications with me. I shall prefer any who may be among the friends and acquaintance of the Messrs. Wilberforce. I invite them to do the like. And though I have no right to administer interrogatories

to them, or to dictate what they should do, (using the words of Mr. Robert Wilberforce,) "to set themselves right with the public;" yet I recommend them to show to such persons the letter Mr. Southey wrote, acknowledging the reception of a presentation copy of the *Life*; and I put it to the honour of the biographers as gentlemen, and their consciences as clergymen, to state to such referees whether Mr. Southey did not then or has not since expressly or impliedly intimated his grief at their treatment of Mr. Clarkson. I do not inquire whether he made to them any *complaint* of their use of his own letters, because he might think any complaint to them idle: the wrong is irremediable and cannot be committed again. I content myself with stating, that one of his letters to me does express such grief and such complaint, and that in another he speaks of his advice to Mr. Clarkson to write portions of his "*Life*," but in a manner that implied no censure. On this subject I have had the pleasure of conversing with Mr. Southey, and I believe we agreed perfectly in opinion. This belongs to another section.

SECT. XIV.—MR. CLARKSON'S PECULIARITY.

Such is the dainty phrase under cover of which the sons of Mr. Wilberforce wish to impress a sarcasm on Mr. Clarkson with credit to themselves, and to which they would gladly make Mr. Southey a party. The subject is so unworthy, I had almost said, themselves, but certainly, the object of their

sneer, that, as I, under that impression, even treated it more slightly in the Supplement than in the Eclectic Review, so I should now, but for the opportunity afforded me, of contrasting with their own, their father's more generous sentiment. I thus noticed the charge in the Eclectic Review :—

“As to the general charge of egotism against Mr. Clarkson's book, we smile at it as proceeding from one who has no sense of the worth of the History : its only value is as a chapter of autobiography ; and egotism is its charm. Mr. Latrobe is cited as an authority ; and this gentleman is noticed with praise by the Edinburgh Reviewer. A long letter by him is quoted, containing a statement which the biographers themselves deny the truth of. He says that many Reviews had brought this charge against Clarkson's History. This is loose writing. We are quite sure that the biographers spared no pains to find out these Reviews. They are enabled to mention only one, the Christian Observer, which it appears was set on foot by Mr. Wilberforce and his personal friends (ii. 338). In fact, (we mention it not in dispraise of the periodical), the Christian Observer was always reported to be conducted by a very intimate friend of Mr. Wilberforce, one of the individuals whom the Life as industriously elevates, as it depreciates Mr. Clarkson, for whom, however, we feel nothing but high esteem ; still, as an authority in a question between the friends of Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Clarkson, the Christian Observer has the least possible weight.”

I avoided the name that is so needlessly, and I will say, indelicately, brought forward by the Messrs. Wilberforce. Mr. Clarkson would not preserve the memory of any slight alienation or estrangement that may have arisen between himself and the excellent man whom the Messrs. Wilberforce think it

produces effect to represent as unfriendly to him. Mr. Clarkson's *Strictures* contain an evidence of the continued interchange of acts manifesting reciprocal esteem between them down to a late period, which was unexplained to the general reader, but which every survivor of the Stephen, Macaulay and Wilberforce families has probably understood, and all but the Messrs. Robert and Samuel Wilberforce have, I trust, duly appreciated. In the *Strictures* there was no further allusion made to this: but it was said, and, as I believe, under the sanction of Mr. Southey's concurring judgment:—

"I am neither surprised nor offended at those who cannot relish Mr. Clarkson's *History of the Abolition*; but I must be allowed to smile at the judgment of those who reproach it for its egotism. The narrative of every incident in which Mr. Clarkson takes part, is written with such earnestness and feeling as to secure the sympathy of the reader. Had the author confined his history to his personal adventures, and entitled his work *Memoirs*, not *History*, it would have obtained a place of distinction in that very delightful class of compositions, autobiography."

The Number (169) of the *Christian Observer* referred to contains but a brief note, written so late as 1816, characterising the *History* as "remarkable, chiefly for the earnest and natural warmth of heart which it manifests, and for the strange redundancies and still stranger omissions, and, above all, the extravagant egotism, with which it abounds."

This need not disturb a friend of Mr. Clarkson, nor does it serve the purposes of the Messrs. Wil-

berforce. A *redundancy* may be in bad taste, but raises no serious objection; and even *omissions* do not necessarily imply *unfairness*. The note itself does not show any reflection in the writer, whoever he were. In the reproachful sense of the word, there is no egotism in Mr. Clarkson's works, and I used the term but figuratively. That man is a disgusting egotist, whose head and heart are filled by his own miserable personalities,—who discourses incessantly of his family, his estate, his horses, his amours, and all the other frivolities which fill *his* mind,—who values every thing merely according to its relation to himself. But he is no egotist, even when he talks about his own work,—be it of art or science,—or of his own actions, if it is the beneficent result which fills his mind,—and not the personal element that alone attached him. The great musician may hearken with rapture to the tones of his own instrument, and the great poet recite his own verses with delight and without reproach:—the disgrace is, when the miserable artist prefers his daub to the master-piece of another; or the mere versifier is unable to enjoy the genuine poetry of his rival.

When Mr. Clarkson has expatiated on the scenes he witnessed, or dwelt on the consequences of the services which Providence blessed him with the means of rendering to humanity, I see nothing of egotism, in the only sense that wise men reprove. If the personal feeling blend with the moral impulse in all cases, let us bless the wise Providence that

has so constituted Man: and if in good and great men that element may even preponderate a little, let us beware how, by exaggerating their infirmity, we confound those who are truly the salt of the earth, with the vulgar mass who act under scarcely any but personal impulses.

But whoever may have concurred in casting reproach on the History of the Abolition, for the egotism of the writer, Mr. Wilberforce was not among them. The letter which he wrote to Mr. Clarkson, on receiving a presentation copy of the Life, has been found since the publication of the *Strictures*, and is that which has already been referred to as published in *Tait's Magazine* for June 1839. I copy a portion of the accompanying letter to the Editor.

“ May 20, 1808.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I have been, for several days, intending (indeed ever since I heard the book was out) to write to Mr. Allen, to beg him to secure me a copy. That which is now on my table will be more valuable to me, on account of its being your gift. I shall assign it a distinguished place in my library, as a memorial of the obligations under which all who took part in the Abolition must ever be to you, for the persevering exertions by which you so greatly contributed to the final victory. That the Almighty may bless all your other labours of love, and inspire you with a heart to desire, a head to devise, and health and spirits to execute them and carry them through, is the cordial wish and prayer of your faithful friend, &c.

“ W. WILBERFORCE.

“ I beg my remembrances to Mrs. Clarkson. My wife would join; but I never get to her, at Broomfield, from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning.”

"This letter does not amount to a recognition of the correctness of Mr. Clarkson's statements, (Mr. Wilberforce's continued friendship with Mr. Clarkson to the day of his death proves that;) but the letter is in this respect very remarkable; that while others have idly objected to Mr. Clarkson's History on the ground that it contained too much of Mr. Clarkson's own doings, Mr. Wilberforce assigns it a distinguished place in his library, for no other reason than that it is a 'memorial of the obligations of all Abolitionists to him for his persevering exertions'—that is, because it records his own actions."

SECT. XV.—PRIORITY OF EXERTION.

The Messrs. Wilberforce (p. xxiv.) affect surprise at being supposed to have ever disputed Mr. Clarkson's claims. "*The editors declared that Mr. Clarkson's public efforts were the earlier.... They have never stated more than that Mr. Wilberforce's efforts were not, as the History implied, the fruits of Mr. Clarkson's. This point they have abundantly established.*"

Here it must not be overlooked how artfully the word *public* is omitted in the second part of this sentence, which is a gross mis-statement of the point in dispute. There is no sense in the word *effort* as opposed to *public* effort. This mistake is clearly pointed out in the Supplement, quoting the Edinburgh Review.

"They maintain, then, that his" [Mr. W.'s] "*attention had been directed to the abolition of the slave trade for some time before the subject had engaged Mr. Clarkson's notice.*" These few words embody what may be considered the great mistake of the Messrs. Wilberforce, the confounding a matter of sentiment with a strenuous act of the will and practical resolution. When they

affirm that Mr. Wilberforce's impulse to devote himself to the abolition was the fruit of this religious change (i. 140.), and deny that either Lady Middleton, or Mr. Clarkson, or that any accident led to this great event, they say what is in perfect consistency with Mr. Clarkson's History and the present Strictures. As an affair of conscience and moral feeling, Mr. Clarkson never suggests that he in the slightest degree influenced Mr. Wilberforce."

But, proceeding from religious impulses to actual efficient labour,—that is, properly, *efforts*,—it is not more certain that the fruit hangs on the branch and that the branch grows on the stem—than that Mr. Wilberforce's efforts—that is, his parliamentary and public efforts—were a carrying into effect, through the House of Commons, the measures which had been previously prepared by the Abolition Society, of which Mr. Clarkson was the founder; and which are the only efforts the editors have a right to advert to. If they take credit for not having advanced any other claim, they ought also to repudiate their friend and advocate, the reviewer, who, in his summary of the points they have proved, says,

"That he had been co-operating with Mr. Pitt for the advancement of the measure long before his acquaintance with Mr. Clarkson commenced, and for at least two years before the period at which Mr. Clarkson takes to himself the credit of having made a convert of that great minister."

This surely looks like a claim of public effort. It is true, I add, "There is nothing in the Life to justify this statement;" and I proceed to disprove it. But the editors and their reviewer are so very

closely allied, as to render it difficult not to consider them as reciprocally privy to and responsible for each other's writings. The biographers ought not to avail themselves of his aid to the extent they do, —borrowing his suggestions, without protesting against his mistakes in their favour. They ought to disclaim what they are content to forego the benefit of. Their utter silence as to the Edinburgh Review is one of the artifices of their second book, as that review was one of the artifices to bring their first book into notice. And this silence weakens the effect of the retraction contained in the second Edinburgh Review; for as that retraction has not been publicly recognised by the author of the first review, it can be considered as no more than a disclaimer on the part of the editor of the Review, of the family opinions which, unhappily for an instant, had been adopted in the Review.

The editors, however, waiving the recognition of their friend's services, and an acceptance or disclaimer of them, enlarge on the undisputed point—the early religious feelings of their father; and they conclude their Preface with a burst of pious sentiment, to which there is no objection, but that it is out of place. That objection, however, implies more than a mere logical *Non sequitur*. It reminds me of a well-known expedient in the Roman States.—When a riot takes place in the city, the priest comes out of the sanctuary with the *Venerabile*, and bears it among the crowd. The combatants instantly fall on their knees, and of course leave off

fighting. The reverend authors expect that their readers will, in pure sympathy with, and admiration of, the religious sentiment with which the Preface concludes, lay it down, forgetful of, or indifferent to, what was the professed object of it,—a justification of their outrage on their father's forerunner, associate, and friend.

SECT. XVI.—MAJOR CARTWRIGHT'S RELIGIONS.

“ We will not stop to inquire the moral right of the editors to publish such a memorandum as this; we are quite sure that Mr. Wilberforce would never have sanctioned it.”—*QUARTERLY REVIEW*.

In page xx. an inference is drawn from the fact, that “ in these five volumes there is no other instance in which the editors are even accused of pandering to the morbid curiosity of the public.” The memory of, at least, one of these gentlemen is very defective. There appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, in September 1838, a correspondence between Miss Cartwright, the niece of the late Major, and Mr. Robert Wilberforce. An abstract of it will not be out of place here; for though the incident itself is foreign from Mr. Clarkson's cause, yet the spirit of Mr. Robert Wilberforce's conduct towards the lady is so precisely similar to that which it has been my business to illustrate, that it throws great light on what must be considered as the family habit. These gentlemen thought proper to insert

a passage, I. 245, among the Buxton Memoranda of October 1789 :—

“ 23d, Major Cartwright entered the room, whilst discussing Dissenters’ rights—warm argument about Gisborne’s and Paley’s systems. Cartwright said that he had been of thirty religions, and should be, perhaps, of thirty more.”

On this, Miss Cartwright addresses Mr. Robert Wilberforce in a tone of remonstrance becoming a gentlewoman of good sense and feeling :—

“ Far be it from me to impugn the veracity of Mr. Wilberforce; but I must say, that this declaration is so much at variance with the whole tenor of my uncle’s life and conversation, that I am persuaded, as every one must be who knew him or his writings, that something must have been said or implied, either before or after, which qualified the expression, or gave it a very different meaning. You will therefore excuse my saying that it is a cruel thing, and one which I cannot think Mr. Wilberforce would have done, thus to publish a solitary unconnected sentence, spoken nearly fifty years ago, which at once injures the memory of the dead, and hurts the feelings of the living.”

Miss Cartwright then condescends to make a statement of her uncle’s religious profession,—that he was a Unitarian, which she regrets, but withal a man of devotional habits. She makes very judicious citations from his writings, and so shows that Mr. Wilberforce must have misunderstood him. Intimating her intention to publish her letter, she thus concludes :—

“ If you think proper to authorise me to express regret on your part for having inflicted it (and I am very willing to believe that

you cannot have meditated an injustice), I shall be ready to do so at the same time."

Then follows Mr. Robert Wilberforce's letter, which is a gem of its kind.

"TO MISS CARTWRIGHT.

"MADAM,—In consequence of my temporary absence from home, your letter of August the 10th has but just reached me : I should otherwise have lost no time in expressing my regret that any words recorded by Mr. Wilberforce should be calculated to wound your feelings. They were, I am sure, recorded with no unfriendly purpose ; but only, I suppose, because they seemed at the time to convey something characteristic. And I think it would not be difficult to show that, regarded as hyperbolical expression, they harmonise but too truly with that religious system which Major Cartwright had unhappily adopted, and by means of which his very uprightness and conscientiousness of mind were likely to involve him in constant perplexities.

"But on this subject I am unwilling to enter on a correspondence which, from what you mention, may perhaps be made public. I can only add, therefore, the expression of my regret that you should feel yourself compelled to take this step.

"I have the honour to be, Madam,

"Your very obedient Servant,

"August 22d, 1838."

"ROBERT J. WILBERFORCE."

"Never by tumbler through the hoops was shown
Such skill in passing all, and touching none."

Mr. Robert Wilberforce cannot, or will not, see—

1. That Mr. Wilberforce's private journal is no record.

2. That their *Life* was written to characterize not Major Cartwright, but Mr. Wilberforce.

3. That no one cares to inquire why Mr. Wilberforce thought proper to keep an idle journal of after-dinner table-talk, but why his sons imagined that, because such things are among his papers, they had a right to print them.

The justification is as bad in a court of conscience as it would be in a court of law. All this the reverend gentleman should have known, and therefore should have expressed some regret at the pain he had given ; but writing as a monk might have written from his cell, and as if aloof from all the ordinary relations of social life ; he merely regrets that Miss Cartwright will do herself honour by vindicating her uncle's honour ; and either from insensibility or pride, betrays not the faintest consciousness of wrong, any more than either of these gentlemen do towards Mr. Clarkson.

In all this we may suspect the stimulus of polemical feelings which the uncalled-for attack on Unitarianism betrays. The Messrs. Wilberforce are generally by no means insensible to the claims of rank and station. Major Cartwright was a gentleman, and much more. In whatever estimation his political system may be held, he was universally acknowledged to be a man of varied scientific attainments, and great activity of mind. Beyond this, he was a man of high honour, of unblemished integrity, and exemplary life. But he also belonged to a political party, on whom the biographers are probably not unwilling to insinuate reproach. Had a similar

idle word been uttered, or had Mr. Wilberforce fancied and *recorded* such a word as uttered by one of his own Tory friends, would it have been published?

SECT. XVII.—THE CORRESPONDENCE.

“I am sure that of my numerous letters in their possession, they are ready to publish all that they think discreditable to me, and withhold all that does me honour.”—CLARKSON’S *Strictures*.

It formed no part of my intention to examine these letters, but I glanced my eye over them with a view to Mr. Clarkson’s controversy, and I cannot think that the editors had dismissed the subject from their minds while they made their collection. It was to be reasonably expected that they would avail themselves of all their resources to supply deficiencies which had been pointed out to them. My own attention was first drawn to the letters of Mr. Pitt, bearing in mind the assertions of the Edinburgh Reviewer as to the years of co-operation between the minister and his friend, before even the acquaintance of Wilberforce and Clarkson. That there should not be the slightest trace of any such intercourse, could not surprise me, because I was satisfied that such intercourse was a mere dream; but I was amused at the desperate endeavour to prove such co-operation from a note which Mr. Pitt wrote to borrow *Anderson’s book of Commerce*! Neither did I wonder that the collection did not

contain those of Mr. Wilberforce's letters to Mr. Clarkson, of which Mr. Robert Wilberforce wrote that he had reserved copies, as being interesting in themselves; though from the paucity of really interesting letters in the volumes, some readers may regret the loss of them. The Clarkson controversy is much more likely to have occasioned the suppression than the introduction of letters. There may be one, perhaps, that of Mr. Hoare (vol. I. p. 89), which owes its place to this occurrence; how many may owe their exclusion to it, I cannot possibly divine. But there is one most important omission to which I have to direct the reader's serious attention.

I have already sufficiently animadverted on the groundlessness of the pretence that Mr. Wilberforce was the leader of the Committee, instead of their representative in the House of Commons. But the error went beyond the merely ascribing this leadership to Mr. Wilberforce. There is a very remarkable passage in vol. I. p. 167.—It is stated that in the bringing forward of the evidence, "it had been previously determined that *the London Committee should alone appear, whilst the leaders of the cause should direct their movements for a while unseen.*" And to this remarkable text there is a reference as remarkable as the *Vide Minute-books of the Abolition Society*. For the reference is, "LETTER FROM SIR CHARLES MIDDLETON."

If there be any one of the thousands of letters

possessed by the editors, which sooner than any other they should have published in these volumes, it is this letter of Sir Charles Middleton; for it is cited to prove a fact, substantially denied in the *Strictures*, and of prime importance; and its absence ought to be accounted for. Lest I should be met by a repetition of the note, and it should be said hereafter to justify a continued refusal to enter into controversy,—“Who dares to insinuate that we cited a letter which we were conscious we did not possess,” I beg most unaffectedly to say, that I impute no such act to the editors. I believe that that reference was made rashly; that when the Supplement, though it requires no notice, nevertheless compelled them to a closer examination of their papers, it was found that the letter did not warrant the inference drawn; and it was thought more prudent to pass it over, in the hope that the omission might escape notice, than to occasion comment by publishing it. We have all our respective modes of acting. Mine is to acknowledge a mistake the moment I discover it; that of the Messrs. Wilberforce is to explain nothing and acknowledge nothing. Whether they will persist in giving no explanation, even in this case, remains to be seen. It will be borne in mind that the assertion which this *unproduced* letter is cited to prove, changes the whole character of the Abolition Society, and entirely falsifies Mr. Clarkson’s *History*. I do not yet withdraw my acknowledgment—that the opinion professed by the editors of

the extent of their father's services, with which this gross error is so closely connected, was originally an honest misconception; but a froward retention of the error, after such evidence as has been brought forward, cannot receive a like favourable construction. Already too much has been allowed to the Messrs. Wilberforce in consideration of the source of their error. Their friend, the Edinburgh Reviewer, did not scruple to proclaim, that "God had bestowed on Mr. Wilberforce a name of imperishable glory." His sons are conscious of inheriting that name, and seem so dazzled by merely the reflection of that glory, as to lose all power of discerning the light that is cast on either themselves or others. Their position does not permit them in fact to see whence the light issues nor the direction of its beams. Such is their blindness that they see not even this—That to have been the forerunner, associate, and friend of Mr. Wilberforce, is more than to be the fruit of his loins: that waiving all inquiry into the relative worth or eminence of Wilberforce and Clarkson, at all events the superiority assumed by the sons of one over the other partakes even of the ridiculous; and that the scorn which they affect towards even Mr. Clarkson's friend, is not warranted by their own station in society, nor any quality, moral or intellectual, which they have yet exhibited to the world.

THE END.

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